

מְגַלְתַ אֶסְתֵר

the BOOK of ESTHER

זה בימי אחשוריוש הוא אחשוריוש המלך מהדרו
וזה בושם שבע ועשרים ומאה מרינה בימים רהם
בשכת המלך אחשוריוש על כפא מלכוות אשר
בשושן והבירה בשנה שלוש למלכו עשה משותה
לכל שרווי ועדריו חיל פרס ומרדי הפרתמים
ושרי הממלות לפניו בהראתו את עשר כוכור
מלכוות ואת יקר הפארת נזולתו ימים רכבים
שמולים ומאת ים ובמלואת הימים האלה
עשה המלך לכל העם המגלאים בשושן הבראה
למנדול וער קטן משותה שבעת ימים בחזר גזת
ביתן המלך רוז נרפס ותכלת אחו צחבל בוץ
וארגנו על גלילי כסף ועומדי שעש מטות אורב
וכסף על רצפת ברת וושועוד וסחרת והשקות

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*To Edythe
Eshet Hayil,
Source of Blessing.*

A special thanks to the multitalented Arthur Friedman, who has robed the text with powerful imaginative drawings and given flesh and the breath of life to this exciting historical drama. His artistic imagery has captured, with extraordinary clarity and in glowing colors, the authentic Persian milieu.

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INTRODUCTION

“This happened during the days of King Ahhashverosh” — thus the Book of Esther begins the breathtaking story of intrigue, ruthlessness, and deliverance in the ancient land of Persia over 2,000 years ago.

The simple parchment scroll brings to life the rich images of the participants in this exciting Jewish historical drama.

Esther, the heroine, feminine in beauty, risks her life to save the Jews of Persia from a genocidal massacre.

Mordechi, her uncle, God-fearing and resolute in the face of impending disaster.

Haman, the demonic vizier of Persia, who decides to annihilate the Jews and use their property and wealth to further his own political aims.

King Ahhashverosh, the licentious, hard-drinking, indecisive monarch, who gives Haman permission to destroy the Jews.

The story of Esther is the eternal story of hatred which has been repeated in different countries in almost every generation to the present time.

Over the centuries, community and family Purims have been set aside to commemorate localized deliverances from great evils and tyrants. They were celebrated with festivities and often with the reading of a scroll telling the story of their particular deliverance.

At times, there were no miracles. There was no Purim for the Jews of Europe during the Nazi period. Under the diabolical leadership of Hitler, six million innocents were murdered, gassed and burned in the death camps of Germany.

Today, Purim is the merriest holiday of the Jewish year. It is celebrated with Shalach Manot, carnivals, parties, masquerades, eating, carousing, and even silliness.

It is the one day of the year when even drunkenness is tolerated. The Talmud declares: “A person is obligated to drink enough on Purim so that he cannot distinguish between ‘Blessed is Mordechi’ and ‘Cursed is Haman.’” Interestingly enough, the numerical value of both of these Hebrew phrases is identical — 502.

For 2,000 years the story of Esther has been like an oasis in the desert which again and again springs to life and gives us hope and strength in times of duress. The festival of Purim offers Jews a lesson of courage and faith. In darkest moments the festivities cheered the Jews and inspired them with hope of final victory over their enemies, just as Esther and Mordechi triumphed over Haman.

Before the Megillah is read, the reader chants the following three blessings:

ברוך אתה ייִשְׁׁהָוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם. אֲשֶׁר קָרְבָּנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ. וְצָוָנוּ עַל-מִקְרָא מְנֻלָּה:

ברוך אתה ייִשְׁׁהָוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם. שְׁעִשָּׂה גָּוִים לְאַבְוֹתֵינוּ בְּפִימֵינוּ הַהֲם. בְּזַמָּן הַזֶּה:

ברוך אתה ייִשְׁׁהָוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם. שְׁהַחֲרִינוּ. וְקִימָנוּ. וְהִגְּעָנוּ לְזַמָּן הַזֶּה:

א וַיַּהֲיֵ בַּיּוֹם אֲמַשְׁנֹרֹשׁ הוּא אַמְשְׁנֹרֹשׁ הַמְלָךְ מֶתֶן וְעַד-פִּישׁ שְׁבֻעַ וְעַשְׁרִים וּמִאָה מִדְינָה: ב בִּיקִים הַהָם בְּשָׁבָת | הַמְלָךְ אֲמַשְׁנֹרֹשׁ עַל כֶּפֶא מֶלֶכְתָו אֲשֶׁר בְּשׁוֹשָׁן הַבִּירָה: ג בְּשָׁנָה שְׁלֹשָׁה לְמַלְכָוֹ עַשְׁה מִשְׁתָּחָה לְכָל-שְׂרִיו נְעָבָרִיו תִּיל | פָּרָס וּמִדִּי הַפְּרַתְמִים וְשָׂרֵי הַמִּדְינּוֹת לְפָנָיו: ד בְּהַרְאָתוֹ אַחֲ-עַשְׁר בְּכֹדֶם מֶלֶכְתָו וְאַחֲ-יָקָר תִּפְאָרָה גְּדוּלָתוֹ יָמִים רַבִּים שְׁמוֹנִים וּמִאָה יָמִים: ה וּבְמִלְזָאת ה הַיָּמִים הַאֲלָה עַשְׁה הַמְלָךְ לְכָל-הָעָם הַגְּמַצָּאִים בְּשׁוֹשָׁן הַבִּירָה: לְמַאֲדָל וְעַד-גָּפָן מִשְׁתָּחָה שְׁבֻעָת יָמִים בְּחִצָּר גְּנַת בִּימָן הַמְלָךְ: ו חִור | כְּרֶפֶס וְחִכְלָה אֲחוֹן בְּחִכְלִי-בּוֹן וְאַרְגָּמָן עַל-גָּלִילִי כְּסָף וְעַפְוּזִי שְׁשָׁ מִטּוֹתָה | זְגָב וְזְסָף עַל רָצֶף בְּהַט-נְשָׁשׁ וְגַר וְסַחַר:

1:2 The Persian king resided in Shushan (Susa) only during the winter. The royal court moved to Persepolis for the summer months, when the heat of Shushan became unbearably hot.

1:6 At Persepolis, archeologists have unearthed the remains of several stone Persian palaces. One of them has an elaborately decorated throne room 200 feet by 200 feet. A huge room of this size can hold thousands of people.



CHAPTER ONE

1. This happened during the days of King Ah-chash-ver-osh, who ruled one hundred and twenty-seven provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia.

2. At the time that King Ah-chash-ver-osh ruled over his kingdom from the capital, Shushan, the Fortress,

3. in the third year of his rule, he made a feast for all of his princes, advisors, and army officers.

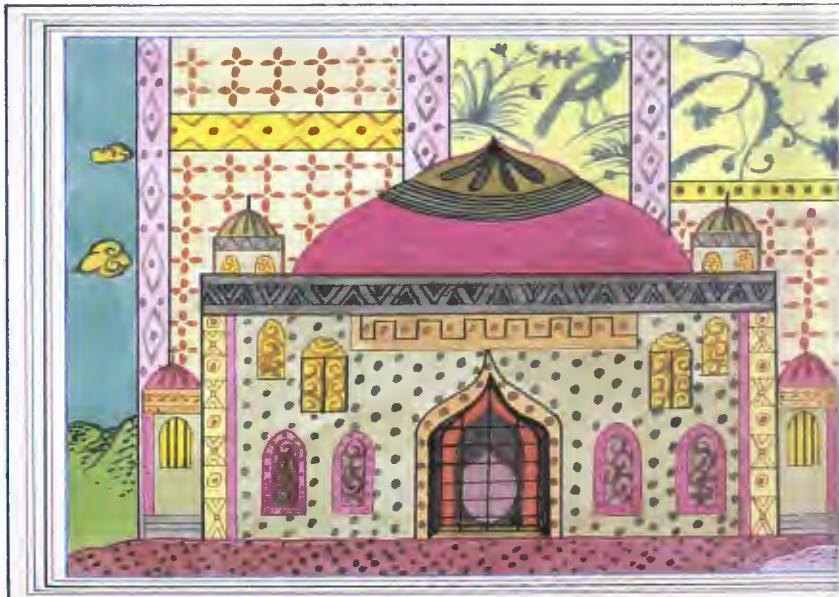
4. At that party the king showed off his great riches and the glory of his kingdom. This grand celebration lasted for 180 days.

5. When the celebration was over, the king made another feast for the people of Shushan, great and small, a feast which lasted seven days. This feast took place in the court of the garden of the king's palace.

6. The palace was decorated with white, green and blue curtains tied with ribbons of linen and purple, on rods of silver and pillars of marble; benches of gold and silver stood upon a floor covered with red, white, yellow and black marble.

1:1 Today, the Jews of India are called "B'nai Israel" and those of Ethiopia are called "Falashas."

1:1 Ahashverosh is usually identified as Xerxes, or Khshayarsha, the son of Doryavash (486–465 B.C.E.). According to Greek sources, Xerxes — Ahashverosh — was a powerful but temperamental ruler, a character that fits the king in the Book of Esther.



וְהַשְׁקוֹת בְּכָלֵי זָהָב וּכְלִים מִכְלִים שׁוֹגִים וְיִין מַלְכּוֹת בְּבִינָה הַמֶּלֶךְ חַ וְהַשְׁתִּיה בְּקַת אֵין אָגָס כִּי-כֵן | יַפְדֵּה הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל בְּלַ-רְבֵּב בִּירְוֹ לְעַשּׂוֹת בְּרָצְוֹן אִישָׁר וְאִישָׁ: ס ט גַּם וְשְׁתִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ עַשְׂתָּה מִשְׁתָּה נְשִׁים בֵּית הַמְלָכִות אֲשֶׁר לְמֶלֶךְ אַחֲשְׁוֹרֹשׁ: י בַּיּוֹם הַשְׁבִּיעִי קָטוֹב לְבַ-הַמֶּלֶךְ בֵּין אָמֵר לְמַהוּמָן בְּזַהָּא מְרָבּוֹנָא בְּגַמָּא וְאַגְּבָחָא זַתְרָ וְכַרְפֵּס שְׁבַעַת הַפְּרִיסִים קְמַשְׁרָתִים אַתְ-פְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשְׁוֹרֹשׁ: אָ לְהַבְּיָא אַחֲ-נִשְׁתִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּכָחָר מַלְכִית לְהַרְאֹת הַעֲמִים וְמַשְׁרִים אַתְ-זִיפְּלָה קִידְ-טוֹבָת מִרְאָה הִיא: י֬ וְחַמְּאַן הַמְלָכָה וְשָׁתִי לְבּוֹא בְּדָבָר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר בַּעַד הַפְּרִיסִים יְדַעַי הַעֲמִים כִּי-כֵן וְחַמְּתוֹ בְּעֵרָה בָּו: ס יְ וְיַאֲמֵר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְחַכְמִים יְדַעַי הַעֲמִים כִּי-כֵן דָּבָר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְפָנֵי בָּלָי יְדַעַי בְּתַת נְדִין: יְ וְנַקְרֵב אַלְיוֹ פְּרָשָׁנָא שְׁתָר אַדְמָתָא מַרְשִׁישׁ מַרְסָנָא מַמּוֹקָן שְׁבַעַת שְׁרִי | פָּרָס וּמְדִי רָאֵי פָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַיּוֹשִׁים רְאִשְׁתָּה בְּמַלְכּוֹת: טו קְדָת מַה-לְעַשָׂה בְּמַלְכָה וְשָׁתִי עַל | אֲשֶׁר לְאַ-עֲשָׂתָה אַתְ-מַאֲמֵר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשְׁוֹרֹשׁ בַּעַד הַפְּרִיסִים: ס טו וְיַאֲמֵר מַוְמָּבָן (מִמוֹן קְרֵי) לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְשָׁלָס לְאַלְ-הַמֶּלֶךְ לְבָדוֹ אֲוֹתָה וְשָׁתִי הַמְלָכָה כִּי עַל-בְּלַ-הַשְׁרִים וְעַל- בְּלַ- הַעֲמִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל-מִדְיּוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשְׁוֹרֹשׁ: יְ קִיְּצָא דָבָר הַמְלָכָה עַל-בְּלַ-הַשְׁנִים לְהַבּוֹת בְּעֵילָן בְּעֵינֵינוּ בְּעֵינֵינוּ בְּאַמְלָם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשְׁוֹרֹשׁ אָמֵר לְהַבְּיָא אַחֲ-נִשְׁתִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ לְפָנֵי וְלְאַבְּאָהָה: יְ וְהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה תָּאִמְרָנָה | שְׁרוֹת פְּרָסִי-זְקָדִי אֲשֶׁר שְׁמָעוֹ אַתְ-דָבָר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְכָל שְׁנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְקָדֵי בְּזִיּוֹן וְגַזְעָפָ: יְ אַס-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טֹב יָצָא דָבָר מַלְכּוֹת מַלְפְּנֵי וַיַּקְרֵב בְּדָמִי פְּרָס-זְמָדִי וְלֹא יַעֲבֹר אֲשֶׁר

1:15 Achashverosh called the legal experts and hoped that they could find a loophole and save his beloved Vashti. They could not restore her to the throne, but they saved her life and exiled her.

1:19 Every year the eunuchs selected a new batch of beauties for the king's harem.

7. The guests drank great quantities of wine from golden cups in many shapes and forms,

8. for the King commanded that no man was to be forced to drink too much, but only as much as they wanted.

9. Queen Vashti also made a feast for the women. This celebration took place in the palace of King Ah-chash-ver-osh.

10. On the seventh day of the feast, when the king was a bit drunk with wine, he commanded his seven closest servants, the eunuchs Mehuman, Bizzetha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and Carcas,

11. to bring Queen Vashti, dressed in her royal crown so that the people could see how beautiful she was.

12. But Queen Vashti refused to parade before the drunken guests; this refusal made the king very angry.

13. The angry king called a meeting of his experts on Persian law, as was customary.

14. The experts were: Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memuchan — seven of the most important princes of Persia and Media.

15. He asked what he should do to Queen Vashti, who had disobeyed him.

16. Memuchan answered on behalf of the others. "Not only has Queen Vashti disobeyed the king, but she has also offended all the princes and people in everyone of the king's provinces.

17. For the news of her behavior will spread throughout the kingdom, and all the women will join her in disobeying their husbands. They will say, 'The king commanded Queen Vashti to appear before him and she refused to come.'

18. At this moment, the wives of the princes of Persia and Media are answering their husbands the same way Vashti answered you: that kind of attitude will cause family dissension.

19. If the king agrees, let him issue a royal order, a Persian decree that can never be changed. Send Vashti into exile and choose a new queen to replace her.

1:8 As a sign of loyalty, numerous toasts were offered to the health and welfare of the king. After three years of rule, the king now felt very secure. Refusal to participate and drink to each toast did not offend him.

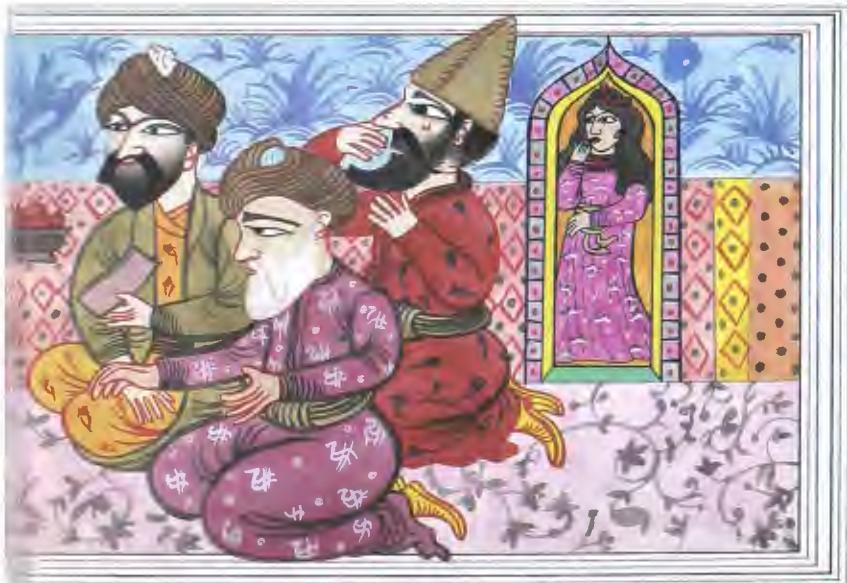
1:10 The seven eunuchs supervised the harem.

לא-תְּבֹא וְשִׁתִּי לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אַמְשָׁרוֹשׁ וּמֶלֶכְתָּה יְתַעַן הַמֶּלֶךְ
לְרֹעֲוִתָּה הַטוֹּבָה מִלְּעָנָה: כ וּנְשַׁמְּעַ פְּתַחַם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַשְׁר-יְעַשָּׂה בְּכָל-
מֶלֶכְיוֹ כִּי בְּרוּחָה תְּיִא וּכְל-הַנְּשָׁיִם יְתַגֵּנוּ יְקַרְלְבָעַלְיָהוּ לְמִגְּדוֹל וּעֶד-
גָּדוֹן: כָּא וַיַּיְתַּבְּכַר בְּעִינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וּמְשִׁגְיִים נִיעַש הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּרוּר
מִמְּוֹקָן: כְּכֹה וַיַּשְׁלַח סְפָרִים אֶל-כָּל-מִדְּנִינּוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-מִרְיָנָה
וּמִרְיָנָה בְּכַתְּבָה וְאֶל-עַם כָּל-שׂוֹנוֹ לְהַיּוֹת כָּל-אִישׁ שִׁיר בְּבִתְּהוֹ
וּמְזֹבֵר בְּלָשׁוֹן עֲמֹו: ס

פרק ב'

ב א אמר נְרָכָנִים קָאָלָה כַּשְׁךְ תְּמַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַמְשָׁרוֹשׁ זָכָר אֲתָה
וְשִׁתִּי וְאת אַשְׁר-עַשְׂתָה וְאת אַשְׁר-גַּנְגַּר עַלְיָה: כ וַיֹּאמְרוּ גַּעֲרִי
הַמֶּלֶךְ מְשָׁרְתָיו יַבְקִשׁוּ לְמֶלֶךְ גַּעֲרָה בְּתַולְוֹת טֻבּוֹת מֶרְאָה:

2:1 The now sober king was despondent at the loss of his queen, Vashti. The advisors were fearful that the king would accuse them of offering the wrong advice. So they decided to divert the king with a beauty contest to choose a new queen.



9 20. When the king's decision is publicized, wives throughout the kingdom will not rebel against their husbands and will treat them with more respect."

21. The king and his advisors were pleased with the suggestion, so Ah-hash-ver-osh followed Memuchan's advice.

22. The king sent orders to every one of his provinces, each in its language and script, directing that all husbands were to be masters of their homes.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Sometime later, when King Ah-hash-ver-osh calmed down, he realized how severely Vashti had been punished in relation to what she had done.

2. To quiet him, his advisors suggested, "Let us search for the most beautiful girls in the kingdom;

1:22 At that time there were several official languages in Persia: Elamite, Babylonian, Aramaic, and, of course, Persian.

Official documents were recorded in Persian and then translated into the language or dialect of the people for whom the communication was intended.



וַיַּפְלֹךְ הַמֶּלֶךְ פָּקִידִים בְּכָל-מִדְינּוֹת מֶלֶכְתֹּו וַיַּקְבֹּצְוּ אֶח-כֶּל-עָרָה-בְּחַוֵּה טוֹבָת מֶרֶאָה אֶל-שִׁוְישָׁן הַבִּירָה אֶל-בֵּית הַנְּשִׁים אֶל-עַד הַגָּאָסְרִים הַפְּלֹךְ שִׁמְרָה הַנְּשִׁים וַנְחָןָן פְּמַגְּקִים: ד וַיַּגְעַרְתָּ אֲשֶׁר פִּיטֶּבֶן בְּעִינֵי הַפְּלֹךְ פְּלֹךְ פְּתַח וְשִׁטִּי וַיַּטְבֵּב הַכְּבָר בְּעִינֵי הַפְּלֹךְ וַיַּעֲשֵׂה קָנוֹ: ס הַאֲרִישׁ יְהוּדִי הָנִי בְּשָׁוְשָׁן הַבִּירָה וְשָׁמוֹ מְרֹדְכָּי בָּנָן יְהוּדִי בְּעִינֵי בְּנֵי-קָרְבָּן אִישׁ יְמִינִים: וַיַּאֲשֶׁר הַגָּלָה מִירְוְשָׁלָם עַם-הַגָּלָה אֲשֶׁר נִגְלַתָּה עִם יְכָנָה מֶלֶךְ-יְהוּדָה אֲשֶׁר הַגָּהָה נִכְוֹבְדָנָר מֶלֶךְ בְּכָל-: וַיַּהַי אָמֵן אֶת-הַדָּפָה תִּהְיָ אָסְפָּר בְּתָה דָדוֹ בְּיַיְינָה לְהָאָבָן וַיַּגְעַבָּה יְפַתְּח-הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיַּטְבֵּת מֶרֶאָה יְכָמֹת אֶבֶיךָ וַיַּפְּהַה לְקַתָּה מְרֹדְכָּי לְזִבְתָּה: חַנִּי בְּחַשְׁמָעַ רַבְּרַה-הַפְּלֹךְ וְרוֹתָה וּבְהַבָּזָן גְּעֻרוֹת רְבוֹת אֶל-שִׁוְישָׁן הַבִּירָה אֶל-יְהוּדִי הָגִי וַתַּלְקַח אָסְפָּר אֶל-בִּית הַפְּלֹךְ אֶל-יְהוּדִי הַגִּי שִׁמְרָה הַנְּשִׁים: ט וַיַּטְבֵּב הַגָּעָנָה בְּעִינֵי וַתִּשְׁלַח תְּסִד לְפָנָיו וַיַּבְּלַל אֶת-פְּמִינִיקָה וְאֶת-מְנוּמָה לְמַתָּה לְהָאָת שְׁבַע תְּפִעָרוֹת הַרְאִוּת לְמַתָּה מִבֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיַּשְׁבַּחַת וְאֶת-גְּנַעֲרוֹתָה לְטוֹב בֵּית הַנְּשִׁים: י לְאַהֲגִידָה אָסְפָּר אֶת-עַזְפָּה וְאֶת-מְלֹדְתָּה בְּיַיְמֵי מְרֹדְכָּי צְנָה עַלְיהָ אֲשֶׁר לְאַתְגִּיד: יא וּבְכָל-יּוֹם וּבְכָל-יּוֹם נִוְסַׁמֵּךְ מְרֹדְכָּי מִתְחַלֵּד לְפָנֵי חָצֵר בֵּית-הַנְּשִׁים לְדֹעַת אֶת-שְׁלֹום אָסְפָּר וּמִה-יְעַשָּׂה בָּה: יב וּבְגַעַע תְּרַגְּמָנָה וַיַּגְעַרְתָּ אֲלַ-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶחָשְׁוֹרֶשׁ מִקְזָן הַיּוֹת לְהָכְתָה הַנְּשִׁים שְׁנִים עַשְׂרֵה תְּרִדְשָׁה בְּיַיְמֵי מְרֹדְכָּי שְׁשָׁה תְּרִדְשִׁים בְּשֶׁמֶן הַמֶּר וְשָׁהָה תְּרִדְשִׁים בְּבֶשְׁמִים וּבְתְּרִדְשִׁים בְּנְשִׁים: יג וּבְזָה

2:8 “Esther was taken,” she did not go of her own free will.

2:10 Esther conducted herself with dignity, even in difficult situations, as Mordechi had taught her. Being taken to the palace and being chosen by Achashverosh were the challenges of her life.

2:10 The rabbis suggest that Esther did not reveal her origin so that she could secretly observe the Sabbath and the mitzvot.

2:10 Why did Mordechi advise Esther to hide her Jewishness? Perhaps to deflect from her the hate and distrust which Persians held for foreigners, especially Jews.

2:13 The chosen girl spent the whole night with the king.

3. Let the king send beauty scouts throughout the kingdom who will bring pretty, unmarried girls to the king's harem in Shushan, to Hegai, the harem keeper, who will dress them in royal clothing and beautify them.

4. And the girl whom the king chooses will become queen in place of Vashti." This plan pleased the king and he approved it.

5. There was a Jew in Shushan named Mordechi, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjaminite;

6. Mordechi had been carried into exile from Jerusalem with the captives who were exiled with Jeconiah, the king of Judah, by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.

7. Mordechi raised Hadassah, whose Hebrew name was Esther, his cousin, for she had no father and mother; Mordechi adopted beautiful Esther as his own daughter.

8. When the king's order was publicized, many beautiful young girls were brought to the king's harem in Shushan and placed in Hegai's care. Esther was taken into the palace, and placed under the care of Hegai, the keeper of the harem.

9. She made an excellent impression upon Hegai; so he rushed her beauty treatment and gave her seven servants and the best apartment in the harem.

10. Esther followed Mordechi's instructions and told no one that she was Jewish.

11. Meantime, Mordechi was worried about Esther. Each day he stationed himself near the harem to find out what was happening to her.

12. Before the girls were paraded before King Ah-chach-ver-osh, they were given a full year of beauty treatments.

13. The girl who came before the king was dressed in special clothing and jewels.

2:5 Our sages say that Kish was the father of King Saul. The generations between Kish and Mordechi are not mentioned. Haman was a descendant of Agag, the Philistine king captured by Saul and killed by Samuel.

2:5 This is the first of the four verses said aloud in the synagogue by the congregation during the reading of the Megillah.

2:6 After months of strenuous fighting, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia captured Jerusalem in 581 B.C.E. King Jeconiah, the royal household, a portion of the upper class, and numerous craftsmen were marched off as captives to Babylonia.

2:7 The Hebrew name Hadassah means "myrtle." Her Babylonian name, Esther, is perhaps derived from the Babylonian goddess "Ishtar."

הגענה באה אל-מלך את כל-אשר תאמר ינוח לך לבוא עמה
מג'ית הנשים עד-בית המלך: יי בערב כי בא לא ולבקר היא ששה
אל-ביה הנשים שני אל-ינ שעתן סריס המלך שמר הפלגשים
לא-תבוא עוד אל-מלך כי אם צפוץ בה המלך ונקראה בשם:
טו ובגיאע תר-אסתר בת-אכימיל לד מרדכי אשר גזח-לו לבת
לבוא אל-מלך לא בקש דבר כי אם את-אשר יאמר הגי סריס
מלך שמר הנשים ותני אסתר נשאת חן באיני כל-ראין:
טו ותלך אסתר אל-מלך אמשירוש אל-בית מלכוות בחדש
העשיר הואר ידע טבח בשנת-שבע למלכוות: יי ואהוב המלך
את-אסתר ממלך-הנשים ותשא-תנו וחסד לפניו מלך-הבותות ומלך
בתר-מלכות בראה נימליך מחת ושתוי: יי ויעש המלך מטה
גדול לכל-שריו ועכדריו את מטה אסתר והנחתה למדינוות עצה
ויתן משאת פינ המלך: יט ובקה-בצ בחלילות שנית ומרדיי ישב
בשער המלך: כ אין אסתר מגדת מולדתה ואת-עפה באשר צוה
עליך מרדכי ואת-מאמר מרדכי אסתר עשה כאשר קיתה באמונה



13

14. She was brought to the king in the evening and in the morning was placed in the second harem where the king's wives lived. The second harem was in the charge of Shaashgaz. That girl never saw the king again unless he wished for her and especially called for her by name.

15. When Esther's turn came, she asked for nothing special except what Hegai, the keeper of the harem, had advised. Everyone in the harem was dazzled by Esther.

16. And Esther was brought to king Ah-chash-ver-osh, to his palace, in the tenth month, the month of Tevet, in the seventh year of his reign.

17. The king loved Esther more than anyone and he crowned her queen in place of Vashti.

18. The king made a great big feast for all his princes and advisors in honor of Esther; Ah-chash-ver-osh distributed numerous gifts and cancelled many taxes.

19. When the beautiful girls were assembled for the second time, Mordechi was sitting near the king's gate.

20. She did not tell anyone that she was Jewish. Even though she was a queen, Esther continued to follow Mordechi's instructions.

2:14 The girls who were not chosen by the king remained in the royal harem for the rest of their lives.

2:15 Esther trusted and relied upon the advice of the eunuch Hegai.



אתו: ס כא בְּיִםְמָם הַהֵם וּמְרָכִי יַוְשֵׁב בְּשֻׁעַרְתַּהְמָלֹךְ קָצֵף בְּגִתְּנוֹ וְהַרְשֵׁ שְׁנִי-סְרִיכִי הַמְּלָךְ מְשֻׁמְרִי הַפָּר נִיְבָקְשׁוּ לְשָׁלֹם זֶה בְּמַלְךְ אַחֲשָׁנָורֶשׁ: ככ וַיַּגְעַן הַקָּבָר לְמְרָכִי נִיגְזֵד לְאָסְטֵר הַמְּלָכָה וְתַאֲמֵר אָסְטֵר לְמַלְךְ בְּשָׁם מְרָכִי: ככ וַיַּבְקַשׁ הַקָּבָר נִימָצָא וַיַּתְּלוּ שְׁנִים עַל-עַז וַיַּכְתַּב בְּסֶפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיּוֹם לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: ס

פרק ג'

ג א אָסְטֵר וְדָרְבָּרִים הַאֲלָה גָּדוֹל בְּמַלְךְ אַמְשְׁרוֹשׁ אֶת-הַמֶּלֶךְ גָּדוֹל הַמְּרָכָה הַאֲגָגִי וַיַּגְשַׁא הָנוּשָׁם אֶת-כְּסָאוֹ מִעַל בְּלַהֲשָׁרִים אֲשֶׁר אָסְטֵר: ב וְכָל-עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר-בְּשֻׁעַר הַמְּלָךְ בְּקָרְעִים וּמְשַׁמְּחוּם לְהַמְּלָךְ בַּיְמָן צָוָה-לְזֹוּ וּמְרָכִי לֹא יִכְרָע וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחַווּ: ג וַיָּאִמְרוּ עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר-בְּשֻׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְמְרָכִי מְדוֹעַ אַתָּה עוֹבֵר אֶת מַצְוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ: ד וַיֹּהֵי בְּאַמְרָס (כְּאַמְרָס קָרִי) אַלְיוֹן יוֹם וַיּוֹם וְלֹא שָׁמַע אַלְיוֹן וַיָּגִידוּ לְהַמְּלָךְ לְרֹאוֹת הַיּוֹמָדָי דְּבָרֵי מְרָכִי בַּיְמָן הַגִּידוּ לְהַמְּלָךְ אֲשֶׁר-הִוא יְהוָה: ה וַיַּרְא הַמְּלָךְ בַּיְמָן כִּי-אַיִן מְרָכִי בְּגַעַע וּמְשַׁתְּחִנָּה לְזֹוּ וְזַהֲלָא קָמָן חַמָּה: וַיַּבְּזַעַן בְּעִזּוֹן לְשָׁלֹם זֶה בְּמְרָכִי לְבַדְוֹ קִידְמָה וְלֹא אָתָּה-עַם מְרָכִי נִיְבַּקֵּשׁ הַמְּלָךְ לְהַשְׁמִיד אֶת-בְּלַהֲיָהוּתִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל-מְלָכִות אַמְשְׁרוֹשׁ עַם מְרָכִי: ז בָּתֵּר שׁ הַרְאָסּוֹן הַוָּא תַּדְשׁ נִיְפָן בְּשָׁנָה שְׁתִּים עֲשָׂרָה לְמַלְךְ אַמְשְׁרוֹשׁ הַפִּיל פּוֹרֵר הַוָּא הַגּוֹרֵל לְפָנֵי הַמְּלָךְ מִיּוֹם לְיּוֹם וּמַתְּדַשׁ לְתִדְשׁ שְׁנִים-עָשָׂר הַוָּא תַּדְשׁ אָבָר: ס ח וַיָּאִמְרֵן קָמָן לְמַלְךְ אַמְשְׁרוֹשׁ יְשַׁׁנֵּנוּ עַם-אָבָד מְבָרֵךְ וּמְפָרֵךְ בֵּין הַעֲמִים בְּכָל מְרִינּוֹת מְלָכוֹת וּמְתִינּוֹת שְׁנָות מְכָלָעָם

3:4 The king's servants tried to impress Mordechi with the seriousness of his crime, but Mordechi persists and refuses to bow down.

3:4 The palace gate was a very busy thoroughfare, and Haman apparently did not notice Mordechi. Now the other officials bring Mordechi's offense to Haman's attention.

3:7 The Jews adopted the Babylonian names for the months of the year. Even the names "Mordechi" and "Esther" are Babylonian.

3:8 Notice that Haman did not tell the king that his victims were to be the Jews.

3:8 Haman's accusations were false. Rabbinic law instructs Jews to obey the rules of the host country. "The civil laws of the country in which you live are valid as law."

21. One day, as Mordechi was sitting at the palace gate, two rebellious officers, Bigthan and Theresh, were plotting to kill the king.

22. Mordechi got wind of the plot, told Esther about the plot and Esther immediately told the king in Mordechi's name.

23. The plotters were questioned and they confessed. The plotters were then executed, and the details of this incident were officially recorded in the king's historical records.

CHAPTER THREE

1. Sometime later, King Ah-chash-ver-osh promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, to prime minister.

2. The king ordered everyone to honor and to bow down to Haman. Everyone bowed down except Mordechi.

3. The king's servants asked Mordechi, "Aren't you afraid to disobey the king's order?"

4. Day after day the officials continued to warn him but Mordechi still refused. They agitated Haman about Mordechi to see whether Mordechi the Jew would prevail.

5. Haman was very furious because Mordechi the Jew was the only one who refused to bow down to him.

6. When Haman learned that Mordechi was Jewish, he decided to punish him as well as all the Jews in the kingdom.

7. In the twelfth year of the reign of Ah-chash-ver-osh — in the month of Nissan — lots (pur) were cast by Haman, to choose the day and the month for a pogrom; the month of Adar was chosen.

8. Then Haman slyly said to Ah-chash-ver-osh, "There is a group of people scattered throughout your kingdom whose customs are different from everyone else's and who do not obey the king's laws. It doesn't make any sense to tolerate them.

2:21 Why would the Persians allow Mordechi to sit in or near the King's Gate? Esther, as a sign of gratitude to Uncle Mordechi, probably arranged to have him appointed to an official position, and thus he was allowed to "sit in the King's Gate."

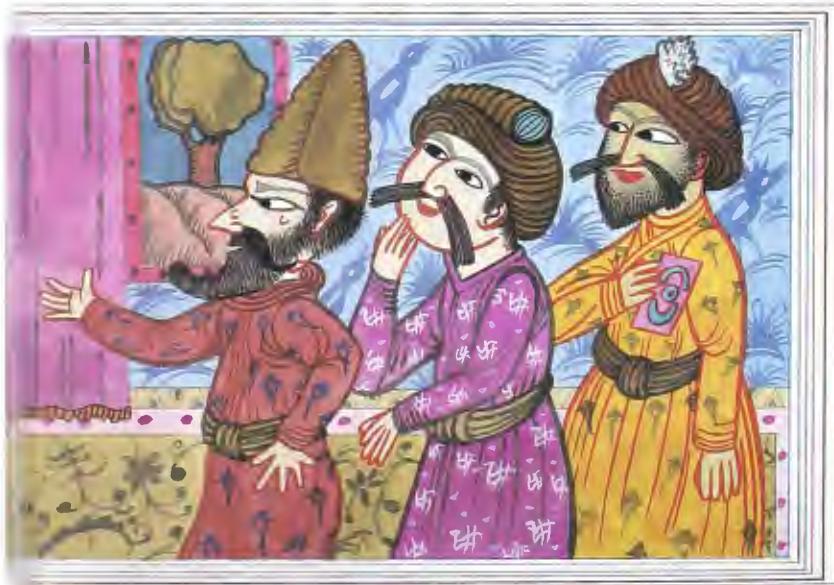
3:3 The writers of the Megillah describe a confrontation between two old enemies. Saul, the king of the Hebrews, is represented by his descendant, Mordechi. Agag, king of the Amalekites, is represented by his descendant, Haman.

ואח'- דתַּי הַמֶּלֶךְ אִינָם עַשִּׁים וְמֶלֶךְ אֵין-שָׁנוּ לְהַנִּיחָם: ט אַם-עַל-
הַמֶּלֶךְ טֹוב יַכְתֵּב לְאַבְדָם וְעַשְׂרַת אַלְפִים כְּבָר-בְּסִיף אַשְׁקָול עַל-יִדְיָו
עַשִּׁי הַמֶּלֶךְה לְהַבִּיא אֶל-גְּנוּנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיַּסֵּר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַתְּ-טְבָעָת
מַעַל יָדו וַיַּתְנַהֵה לְהַמְּנוֹן בָּרוּךְ הַמֶּלֶךְה אֶגְנִי צָרֵר הַיְהוּנִים: יא וַיַּאֲמַר
הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַמְּנוֹן הַכְּסָף נָתַן לְךָ וְנָעַם לְעַשְׂוֹת בָּו בְּטוּב בְּעִינֶיךָ:
יב וַיַּקְרָאוּ סְפִרִי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּחִדְשׁ הַרְאָשׁוֹן בְּשָׁלוֹשָׁה עַשֶּׁר יוֹם בָּו
וַיַּכְתֵּב בְּכָל-אַשְׁר-צִנָּה הַמְּנוֹן אֶל אַחֲשֵׁר פְּגִינִ-הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶל- הַפְּתֻחָת
אַשְׁר עַל-מִדְיָנָה וּמִדְיָנָה וְאֶל-שְׂרֵי עַם וְעַם מִדְיָנָה וּמִדְיָנָה בְּכַתְּבָה
וְעַם וְעַם בְּלִשְׁוֹנוֹ בְּשָׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁר נְקָבָן וְנְחָקָם בְּטְבֻעָת

Under the Nazis, wealthy Jewish homes, factories, businesses, and art treasures became the personal property of the ruling Nazi clique. The mob got the leftovers.

3:10 The king had complete trust in Haman's judgment. He did not inquire as to the identity of his victims.

3:12 Haman was a sadist and wished to prolong the agony of the Jews. So he published his decree eleven months in advance.



9. I will be able to pay the treasury 10,000 silver talents if you will issue a decree that they be destroyed."

10. The king agreed and gave his signet ring to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews, with which to seal and sign the order.

11. The king said to Haman, "You can keep the money and still have my permission to do anything you want with them."

12. In the first month, on the thirteenth day, Haman dictated orders to all governors and princes, to every province

3:9 The destruction of the Jews will be an object lesson to the other conquered subjects in the kingdom who dare defy Persian rule.

3:9 Haman offered 10,000 talents of silver for permission to kill the Jews. In today's money it would amount to about \$20,000,000, and perhaps much, much more. This enormous sum was a leverage rub-out. The Jews were a well-to-do class of people in the Persian Empire. Their property and wealth would make the pogrom into a very profitable, though bloody, "cash cow."

How could Haman possibly kill all of them, collect their property, and recoup his \$20,000,000 investment? In all probability, Haman, second to the king, had a group of soldiers under his personal command. The storm troopers would do the killing and then collect the property of the victims for Haman's personal treasury.



המלך: א' וְנִשְׁלַׂוח סָפָרִים בַּנְּצָרָאִים אֶל-כָּל- מִדְינָה כָּלָלֶךָ לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהַרְגֵּן וְלְאַבֵּד אֶת- כָּל-הַיְהוּדִים מִנְעָר וְעַד-זָקָן טָף וְנָשִׁים בָּיוֹם אַחֲרֵי בְּשִׁלּוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר לְחַדְשָׁ שָׁנִים-עָשָׂר הַוָּא- חַדְשׁ אֶת- וְשָׁלָלָם לְבָזָן: ד' פְּתַחְשָׁגָן הַכְּפָרָב לְהַבְּזָמָן דָת בְּכָל-מִדְיָנָה וּמִדְיָנִיתָן לְכָל-קָעֵמִים לְהַיּוֹת עַתְּדִים לִיּוֹם הַזָּהָה: ט' הַרְאָאִים גַּזְאָא דְּחוּפִים בְּדָבָר הַפְּלָלָד וְתָקַת נְתַנָּה בְּשִׁוְשָׁן הַבִּגְהָה וּבְפָלָל וְהַמָּן יָשַׁבֵּי לְשָׁתּוֹת וְהַעֲרֵר שָׁוֹשָׁן נְבוֹכָה: ס'

פרק ד'

ד' וּמְרֹרֶךָי יָדָע אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר גַּעַשָּׁה וַיַּקְרַע מְרֹרֶךָי אֶת-בְּגָדָיו וַיַּלְבַּשׁ שֶׁק נְאָפָר וַיַּצָּא בְּתוֹךְ הַעִיר וַיַּעֲקֹה זָעַקה גְּדוֹלָה וּמְרָה: ב' וַיָּבֹא עַד לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר הַמְּלָךְ קַי אַיִן לְבֹאוֹ אֶל-שַׁעַר הַמְּלָךְ בְּלִבְשָׁ שְׁק: ג' וּבְכָל-מִדְיָנָה וּמִדְיָנִיתָן מָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר רַבְּרַתְּמָלָךְ נְחֹזָה בְּגַעַע אָבֵל גְּדוֹלָל לְיְהוּדִים וְצָוָם וּבְכִי וּמְסַפֵּד שֶׁק נְאָפָר יָצָע לְרַבִּים: ד' וְנִתְּבּוֹאֵנָה (וְחַבּוֹנָה קָרֵי) גַּעַרְוִית אָסְתָּר וּסְרִיפְתָּה וְנִגְדִּיו לְה וּמְתַחַמְלָמָל הַמְּלָכָה מָאֵד וּמְשַׁלֵּח בְּגָדִים לְהַלְבִּישׁ אֶת-מְרֹרֶךָי וְלַהֲסִיר שָׁקוֹ מְעַלְיוֹ וְלֹא גָּבֵל: ה' וַתַּקְרַא אֶסְתָּר לְהַמְּלָךְ מְסִרְבִּי הַפְּלָל אֲשֶׁר העמיד לִפְנֵיךְ וְתִצְׁהַהוּ עַל-מְרֹרֶךָי לְדַעַת מַה-זָּה וְעַל-מַה-זָּה: ו' וַיַּצָּא גַּעַע אֶל-מְרֹרֶךָי אֶל-רַחֲבוֹת הַעִיר אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר הַמְּלָךְ: ו' וַיַּגְדֵּל מְרֹרֶךָי אֶת בְּלָא-אֲשֶׁר קָרְבָּה וְאֶת- אֶפְרַת הַבָּסָר אֲשֶׁר נִמְנָן לְשָׁקָול עַל-גְּנַעַן הַמְּלָךְ בְּיְהוּדִים (בִּיהוּדָה קָרֵי) לְאַבְּדָם: ח' וְאֶת-פְּתַחְשָׁנָן כְּתָבְתָּה אֲשֶׁר-נִפְנַן בְּשִׁוְשָׁן לְהַשְׁמִידָם נִמְנָן לוֹ לְהַרְאָות אֶת-אַסְתָּר וְלַהֲגִיד לְה וְלִצְׁנֹות עַלְיהָ לְבֹאוֹ אֶל-הַמְּלָךְ לְהַחְתְּנוֹ-לוֹ וְלַבְּקַשׁ מְלֵפָנוּ עַל-עַמָּה: ט' וַיָּבֹא הַמֶּתֶךְ וַיַּגְדֵּל אֶת רַבְּרַי מְרֹרֶךָי.

3:15 All the residents of Shushan were in a turmoil. Now, for no reason, Haman and his band of murderers had received permission to kill the Jews. When they finished with the Jews, whom would they attack next?

4:1 Wearing sackcloth and ashes is a traditional rite of expressing grief and mourning.

in its own script and every people in its own language; the order was written and sealed with the king's own signet ring.

13. Runners carried the decree of extermination to all the provinces in the kingdom. All Jews were included in it; young and old, children and women were to be killed on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month of Adar and were to be plundered of all their possessions.

14. This order was to be publicized in all the provinces so that the people would be prepared to carry out the decree at the appointed time.

15. At the king's command, the runners raced away and the extermination order was first posted in Shushan, the capital. Then the king and Haman sat down to drink while the city of Shushan fell into panic and confusion.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. When Mordechi became aware of all that had taken place, he went into mourning, tore his clothing, put on sackcloth and began to weep and moan.

2. No one in mourning was allowed in the king's palace, so Mordechi stood outside the palace gate.

3. All the Jews throughout the kingdom were in mourning, fasting and weeping, and the Jews wore sackcloth and ashes in public.

4. Esther was very distressed when her maids informed her that Mordechi was in sackcloth and ashes; so she sent new clothing to Mordechi, which he refused.

5. Then Esther sent Hathach, whom the king had appointed to serve her, to find out what the problem was.

6. Hathach found Mordechi outside the palace gates.

7. Mordechi told Hathach about the extermination decree and about the money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasury for the right to destroy the Jews.

8. Mordechi gave Hathach a copy of the decree and asked him to show it to Esther; and to tell her to plead with the king to save her people from extermination.

9. Hathach told Esther what Mordechi had said.

3:13 Official letters, written on papyrus, were tied with a ribbon or a piece of string. Then a lump of wet clay or wax was placed over the knot and sealed and stamped with a signet ring.

וְנִתְאָמֵר אָסָּתָר לְהַמֵּד וְחַצְנוּהוּ אֶל-מְרַדְּכֵי: יא. בֶּל-עֲבָרִי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְעַם מִדְיָנִים הַמֶּלֶךְ יָדְעִים אֲשֶׁר בֶּל-אֲישׁ וְאַשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר-בָּבוֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-הַחֲצֵר הַפְּנִימִית אֲשֶׁר לְאַיְקָרָא אֶתְּחַדְּתָה לְהַמִּית לְבָרֵךְ מַאֲשֶׁר יֹשִׁיטֵלּוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-שְׁרָכִיטִת הַנְּקָבָה וְחַיָּה וְאַנְיִי לֹא נִקְרָא תְּלִי לְבָבוֹ אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַלְוָה שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם: יב. נִגְאִידוּ לְמְרַדְּכֵי אֶת דְּבָרֵי אָסָּתָר: יג. וַיֹּאמֶר מְרַדְּכֵי לְקַשְׁיב אֶל-אָסָּתָר אֶל-תְּרַדְּקֵי בְּגַפְשׁוֹ לְהַמְלָט בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ מֶלֶה-הַיּוֹרְדים: יד. קַי אִם-הַחֲנָשָׁת פְּחַרְלִישִׁי בְּעַת הַזֹּאת גַּוֹּה וּמְנַצְּלה יַעֲמֹד לִיהוּרוּם מִמְּקוּם אַחֲרֵי וְאַתְּ וּבֵית-אַבְּיךָ תַּאֲבֹדוּ וּמִי יַוְעַץ אִם-לְעֹת בְּזֹאת הַגַּעַת לְמַלְכָוֹת:טו. וַיֹּאמֶר אָסָּתָר לְקַשְׁיב אֶל-מְרַדְּכֵי: טז. לֹא בְּנָוֹת אֶת-בֶּל-הַיּוֹרְדים הַגְּמַצְאִים בְּשׁוֹשָׁן וְצַוְמוֹן עַל-וְאַל-תְּאַכְּלוּ וְאַל-תְּשַׁׁׁחַטְוּ שְׁלֹשָׁת יְמִים לְיַלְהָה יְיָום גַּם-אָנִי וְגַעֲרָתִי אֲצָוָם בָּנָן וּבְכָן אָבוֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לְאַכְּלָת וּכְאַשְׁר אֶבְּרָתִי אֶבְּרָתִי: יז. וַיַּעֲבֵר מְרַדְּכֵי וַיַּעֲשֵׂה כָּל אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּה עַלְיוֹ אָסָּתָר:

4:16 Esther, her servants and the Jews of Persia fast for three days.

Jewish fasts such as Yom Kippur and Tisha B'Av etc. are always accompanied by prayers. Although the Megillah contains no mention of God or prayer, the reliance on God is presumed by this act.



10. Esther sent Hathach back to Mordechi with the following message,

11. "Everyone knows that anyone who comes into the king's presence without a special invitation is put to death, unless the king holds out his golden scepter; and I have not even seen the king in the last month."

12. Hathach relayed Esther's message to Mordechi.

13. Then Mordechi sent this answer to Esther, "Do you for one second believe that just because you are a queen you will escape the extermination decree?

14. If you do not intervene, I am positive that help for the Jews will come from somewhere else; but you and all your relatives will perish. I believe that you were specifically brought to this palace just for this emergency."

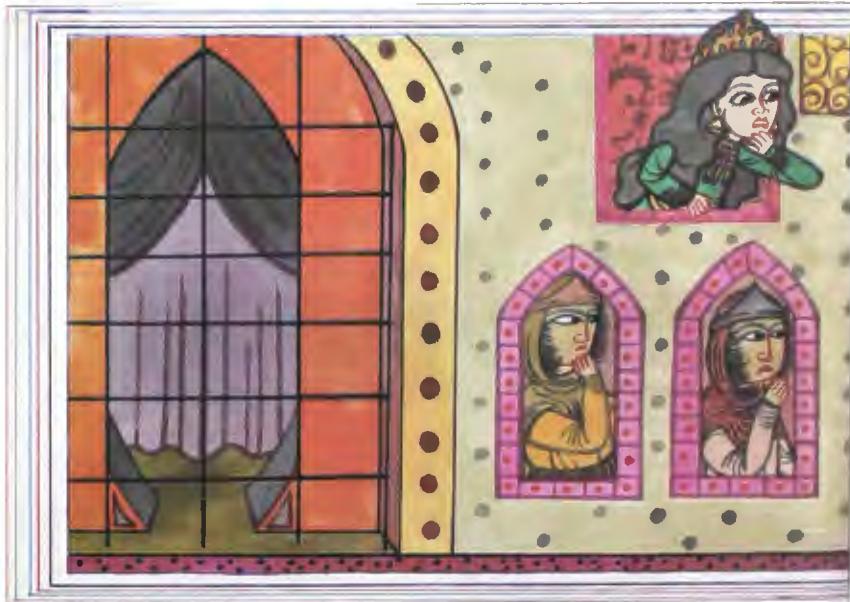
15. Then Esther sent this message to Mordechi.

16. "Gather together all the Jews in Shushan and fast for me for three days and three nights. I and my servants will also fast. In three days I will visit the king unannounced; and if I die, I die."

17. Mordechi left and did exactly as Esther had told him to do.

4:13 Eventually they will find out that you are Jewish and you too will be killed.

4:13 Mordechi firmly believed that Esther was chosen by God and placed in her influential position to save the Jews.



ה א ניְתַי בְּיֻם הַשְׁלִישִׁי וַיַּלְבַּשׁ אָסְטָר מִלְכָות וַיַּעֲמֹד בַּחֲצֵר בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ כַּפְנֵי מִתְחַנֵּחַ בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יֹשֵׁב עַל-כִּסֵּּא מִלְכָות בְּכִיחַת הַמֶּלֶךְ נִכְחַת פָּמַח הַבִּתָּה: ב נִיהְיֵי כְּרָאוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-אָסְטָר הַמֶּלֶךְ עַמְּרָת בַּחֲצֵר גְּשָׁאָה חָן בְּעִינֵי נַיְשָׁת הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאָסְטָר אֶת- שְׁרָבִיט הַזָּקָב אֲשֶׁר בֵּינוֹ וְתַקְרֵב אָסְטָר וַתַּגְעַגְעַג בְּלָאש הַשְּׁרָבִיט: ג נִיאָמֶר לְהַמֶּלֶךְ מִה-זֶּה אָסְטָר הַמֶּלֶךְ וּמַה-בְּגַעַשְׂתָה עַד-חַצֵּי הַמִּלְכָות וַיַּגְעַן לְהַ: ד וַיֹּאמֶר אָסְטָר אֶם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טֹוב יָבוֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּן הַיּוֹם אֶל-הַמֶּשְׁתָה אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂית לֵה: ה נִיאָמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ מִהְרָיו אֶת-קָמָן לְעַשּׂוֹת אֶת-רַבְּרָא אָסְטָר נִיכָּא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּן אֶל-הַמֶּשְׁתָה אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂתָה אָסְטָר: ו וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאָסְטָר בְּמִשְׁתָה הַזֹּאת מַה-שָּׁאַלְתָּךְ וַיַּגְעַן לְזֶה וּמַה-בְּקַשְׁתָךְ עַד-חַצֵּי הַמִּלְכָות וַתַּעֲשֵׂה: ו וַתִּעֲשֶׂן אָסְטָר וַתֹּאמֶר שָׁאַלְתִּי וּבְקַשְׁתִּי: ח אִם-מִצְאָתִי חָן בְּעִינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאִם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טֹוב לְחַתְּ אֶת-שָׁאַלְתִּי וּלְעַשּׂוֹת אֶת-בְּקַשְׁתִּי יָבוֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּן אֶל-הַמֶּשְׁתָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְהָם וַיַּתְּרֵא עֲשָׂה בְּדָבָר הַמֶּלֶךְ: ט וַיַּצְאֵי קָמָן בְּיּוֹם הַהוּא שָׁמֶם וַיַּטְבֹּל בָּבָר וְכָרָאוֹת קָמָן אֶת-מְרֹכֶבֶן בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְלְאַקְמֵם וְלְאַזְעֵז מְלָפָנוּ וַיַּמְלֵא קָמָן עַל-מְרוֹכֶבֶן חַמְמָה: י וַיַּחַטֵּפֵק קָמָן וַיַּבֹּא אֶל-בִּינוֹ וַיַּבְּאֵת אֶת-אַהֲבָיו וְאֶת- גּוֹרֵשׁ אֲשָׁתוֹ: יא וַיַּסְפֵּר לְהָם קָמָן אֶת-כְּבָוד עִשְׂרוֹ וְלִב בְּגִינוֹ וְאֶת-כָּל- אֲשֶׁר גָּדוֹלָה הַמֶּלֶךְ נִזְתָּחָד נִשְׁאָר גְּדֹלָה עַל-הַשְׁלָרִים וְעַבְדִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ: יב וַיֹּאמֶר קָמָן אָרֶף לְאֶהָּבְּיָה אָסְטָר הַמֶּלֶךְ עַם-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל- הַמֶּשְׁתָה אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂתָה כִּי אִם-אָוֹתִי וְגַם-לְמַתָּר אָנִי קָרוֹא-לָהּ עַמ- הַמֶּלֶךְ: יג וְכָל-זֶה אִינְגָּנוּ שָׁ�חָה לְיִכְלֹא-עַת אֲשֶׁר אָנִי רָאָה אֶת-מְרוֹכֶבֶן הַיְהוּדִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ: ד וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ גּוֹרֵשׁ אֲשָׁתוֹ וְכָל-אַהֲבָיו יַעֲשׂוּ-עַל- גָּבְהָ חַמְשִׁים אַמָּה וּבְלָא וְאָמֵר לְמֶלֶךְ וַיַּתְּלוּ אֶת-מְרוֹכֶבֶן עַל-יו וְלֹא עַם-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-הַמֶּשְׁתָה שָׁמֶם נִיְתַּבֵּר תַּפְנִיגִי קָמָן וַיַּעֲשֵׂה

קען: ס

5:7 Esther decides that the time is not ripe to reveal her request. Perhaps she wishes to heighten the suspense.

5:8 "You have continually asked about my race and parentage. At the feast I will reveal my heritage."

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Three days later, Esther entered the throne room dressed in her royal robes.

2. When the king saw Esther, he held out his golden scepter and signaled her to approach. Esther approached and touched the tip of his scepter.

3. Then the king said to her: "Queen Esther, tell me what is bothering you? Even if you ask for half of my kingdom, it shall be yours."

4. And Esther said, "Your majesty, if the king agrees, let him and Haman come to a banquet which I have prepared."

5. And then the king said to his aides, "Hurry, bring Haman so we can attend Esther's banquet." The king and Haman came to the banquet which Esther prepared.

6. As the king was drinking his wine, he said, "Esther, tell me what is troubling you? Even if you ask for half of my kingdom, it shall be granted."

7-8. Then Esther answered and said, "If the king is pleased with me and if he wishes to grant my request, then let the King and Haman come to another banquet tomorrow. At this party I will explain my problem."

9. Haman left Esther's banquet a very happy man; but then he saw Mordechi at the king's gate and his joy turned to anger because, as usual, Mordechi did not bow down to him.

10. But Haman kept his composure and went home and sent for his friends and his wife, Zeresh.

11. Haman boasted to them about his riches, his many children and the honors which the king had bestowed upon him, and how he was now second to the king.

12. And Haman boasted: "Queen Esther even invited the king and I to a banquet in her palace. And tomorrow I will attend still another banquet in her palace.

13. But these honors mean nothing to me when I see Mordechi, the Jew, sitting in the gate of the king's palace."

14. Then his wife, Zeresh, and his friends said to him: "Build a gallows seventy feet high and in the morning ask the king to permit you to hang Mordechi from it: and then you will enjoy your banquet with the king and queen." This advice made sense to Haman and he ordered the gallows erected.

5:6 The king understood that Esther had something very specific in mind. So he says, "Now that we're together, tell me what you want, Esther."

ו א-בְּלִילָה כִּי-הוּא גָּדוֹה שָׁנָת הַפְּלִילָה וַיֹּאמֶר לְהַנְּצִיא אַחֲ-סְפִּיר
הַוּקְלָנוֹת דְּבָרַבִּי הַיָּמִים וַיֹּהֵי גָּדוֹלָם לְפָנֵי הַפְּלִילָה: בָּנִימְצָא בְּהַנִּיבָּר
אֲשֶׁר הָגִיד מַרְדָּקִי עַל-גַּתְּנָא וְתַּרְשָׁ שְׂגִי סְרִיפִי הַפְּלִילָה מִשְׁמָרִי הַסְּעָרָה
אֲשֶׁר בְּקַשׁוּ לְשִׁלְמָה יְדֵי הַפְּלִילָה אַחֲשְׁוֹרוֹשׁ: גָּנוֹלָם הַפְּלִילָה מִהַ-גְּעַשָּׁה
יַּקְרָר וְגַדְוָלָה לְמַרְדָּקִי עַל-זָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ גָּעָרִי הַפְּלִילָה מִשְׁרָמִיו לְאַ-גְּעַשָּׁה
עַמּוּ דָבָר: דָ נִיאָר הַפְּלִילָה כִּי בְּחָאָר וְהַמּוּדָא לְחַצְרָה בֵּית-הַפְּלִילָה
הַחַיְצָוָה לְאָמֶר לְפָלִילָה לְתִלּוֹת אַתְ-מַרְדָּקִי עַל-הָעָז אֲשֶׁר-הַכִּין לוֹ:
הַ וַיֹּאמְרוּ גָּעָרִי הַפְּלִילָה אֶלְיוֹתָה הַמָּן עַמְדָ בְּחָאָר וַיֹּאמֶר הַפְּלִילָה
יְבּוֹא: וַיַּכְּבֹא הַמָּן וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הַפְּלִילָה מִה-לְעָשׂוֹת בְּאַישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַפְּלִילָה
חַפְץ בַּיְגָרּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר הַמָּן בְּלִבְבוֹ לְמַיְ חַפְץ הַפְּלִילָה לְעָשׂוֹת יָקֵר יוֹתֵר

6:1 According to the Talmud, the following thought ran through the mind of Achashverosh: "Why is Esther inviting Haman? Are they conspiring against me to kill me?"

He thought again, "If so, is there no man who is my friend and who would tell me?" Then he thought again, "Perhaps there is some man who has done me a good turn and not been rewarded. That's why people refrain from informing me." Immediately, he commanded his servants to bring the Book of Chronicles.



CHAPTER SIX

1. That night the king could not sleep and he decided to read the historical records of his kingdom.

2. He read how Mordechi had discovered the assassination plot of Bigthan and Theresh, and saved the king's life.

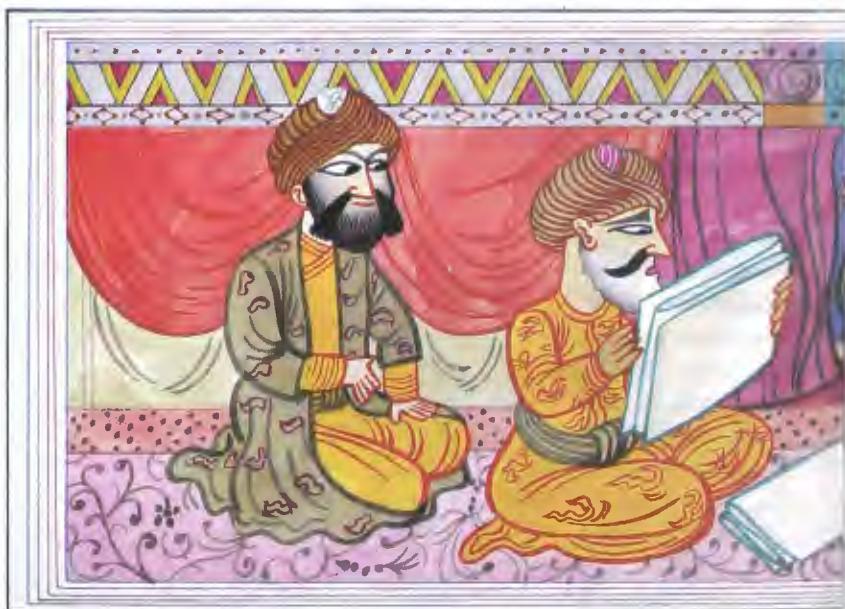
3. And the king said, "How have we rewarded Mordechi for saving my life?" And the king's aides replied, "Nothing has been done for him."

4. And the king continued, "Which of my officials are in the palace?" Now Haman had just arrived to ask the king to hang Mordechi on the gallows that he had just had built.

5. And the king's servants said, "Haman is in the palace." And the king said, "Bring him in immediately."

6. As Haman entered the king said to him, "What shall I do for a man whom I wish to honor?" And Haman thought: "I am the most important person in the kingdom. Of course, the king wants to honor me."

6:1 His secretaries were instructed to keep an accurate record of every significant event in the Persian Empire.



מָהִינִי: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּן אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חִפֵּץ בִּיקָרָוּ: חִבְיאוּ לוּבָשׁ מִלְכִוָּה אֲשֶׁר לְבָשׁ-בָּו הַמֶּלֶךְ וְסֶוֶם אֲשֶׁר רַבְבָּעַלְיוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ נָאשֵׁר גַּפְנוּ בְּמַרְגָּרָתָם בְּרוֹאשׁוּ: ט וְגַתְהָן לְבָשׁ וְהַפְּרוּס עַל-זַיְד-אִישׁ מִשְׁבֵּרִי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַפְּרַתְמִים וְהַלְבְּשׁוּ אַחֲ-הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חִפֵּץ בִּיקָרָוּ וְהַרְכִּיבָהוּ עַל-הַסּוֹס בְּרַחְבוֹן הַמֶּלֶךְ זְקָרָאִי לְפָנָיו בְּקָבָה יַעֲשֵׂה לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חִפֵּץ בִּיקָרָוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַמֶּן מְהֻרָּ קָח אַת-הַלְבִּישׁ וְאַת-הַסּוֹס בְּאֲשֶׁר דָּרְכֶךָ וְעַשְׂה-כֵן לִמְרְדָכָי הַיְהוּדִי הַיֹּשֵׁב בַּשְׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-מִפְּלָל דָּבָר מְכֻל אֲשֶׁר דָּבַרְתָּ: י אַתְּ הַמֶּן אַת-הַלְבִּישׁ וְאַת-הַסּוֹס וַיָּלֶשׁ אַתְּ מְרְדָכָי נִירְכִּיבָהוּ בְּרַחְבוֹן הַעִיר וַיָּקָרְבָּא לְפָנָיו בְּכָה יַעֲשֵׂה לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חִפֵּץ בִּיקָרָוּ: יב וַיָּשֶׁב מְרְדָכָי אֶל-שְׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיָּמָן נִרְכָּב אֶל-בִּיתָו אָכֵל נְחַפְּיוּ רַאשׁ יג וַיָּסֶפֶר הַמֶּן לְוֹרֶשׁ אֲשֶׁתוֹ וְלֹכֶל-אֲהָבָיו אַת בְּל-אֲשֶׁר גַּרְבָּהוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ ילוּ חַכְמָיו וַיָּרֶשׁ אֲשֶׁתוֹ אֶם מִזְרָע הַיְהוּדִים מְרְדָכָי אֲשֶׁר חַלְוָתָם לְגַפֵּל לְפָנָיו לְאַתְוָכֵל ילוּ קִינְגְּפּוֹל תָּפּוֹל לְפָנָיו: יד עֲזָם מִדְבְּרָנִים עַלְמֹו וּסְרִיסִי הַמֶּלֶךְ הָגִיעוּ וַיַּכְלִלוּ לְהַכִּיא אַת-הַמֶּן אֶל-הַמְּשֻׁעָה אֲשֶׁר-עֲשָׂתָה אָסְתָּר:

6:13 At first, the friends advised Haman to hang Mordechi. Now they changed their advice and warned him about the danger of pulling out the rug from under the Persian Jews. Obviously, the Persian Jews were no easy pushovers.



7-8. Haman replied, "For the man whom the king wishes to honor, bring a royal robe which the king has worn and a horse which the king has ridden and place a royal crown on his head.

9. And instruct one of your nobles to enrobe the person whom the king wishes to honor and lead him on your horse through Shushan, proclaiming, 'This is the way the king honors those who serve him well.'

10. Then the king said to Haman: "Hurry, take my royal robes and my horse and do exactly as you have suggested to Mordechi, the Jew who now sits in the palace gate."

11. And Haman robed Mordechi in the king's robes, mounted him on the king's horse and led him through the streets of Shushan shouting, "This is the way the king rewards those he wishes to honor."

12. Then Mordechi returned to his post at the palace gate and Haman sadly and shamefully crept back to his house.

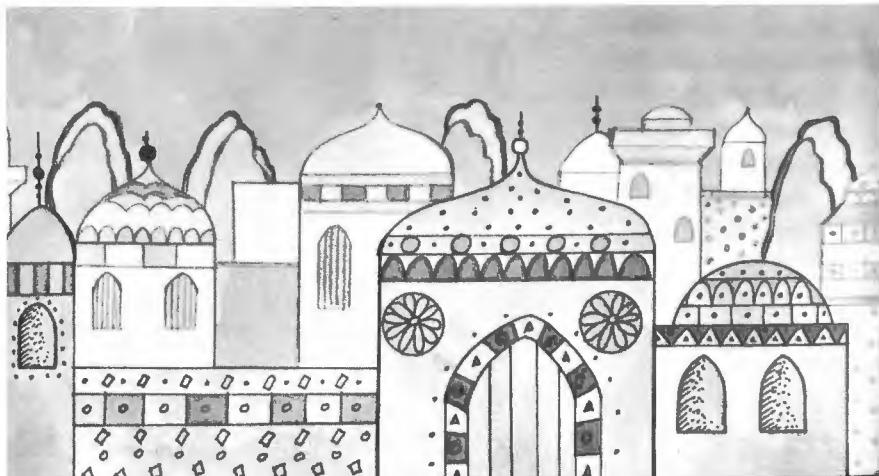
13. When Haman told his wife Zeresh and his friends what had happened, they warned him, "If Mordechi is a Jew, you will never defeat him once he has gotten the upper hand: in the end you yourself will have a great fall."

14. While they were talking, the king's guards arrived to escort him to Esther's banquet.

6:7 Notice that Haman did not mention the king's crown. The crown was a "no-no". Haman was cautious not to reveal his true intentions.

6:10 In the Persian Empire, as in most ancient monarchies, conspiracies and plots against reigning monarchs were frequent. It is not surprising that Persian rulers showered honors upon loyal followers, and especially those who saved their lives.

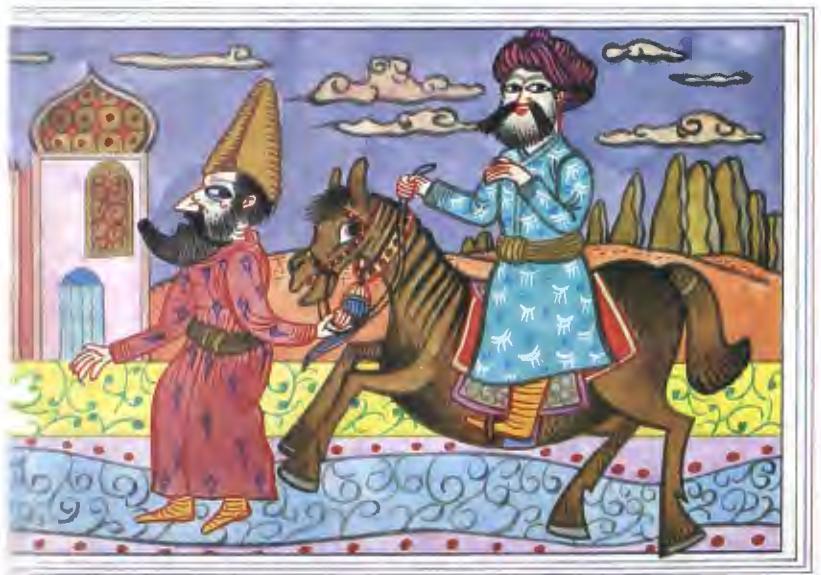
Xerxes (Achashverosh) was assassinated in his bedroom by one of his aides. Interestingly enough, this conspiracy originated in the harem.



וְנִיבָא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמְּלֵךְ לְשָׁפֹות עַם-אָסְטָר הַמֶּלֶךְ: כ וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאָסְטָר גַּם בַּיּוֹם הַשְׁנִי בְּמִשְׁתָּה הַבָּין מִה-שָׁאַלְתָּךְ אָסְטָר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְתַגְתִּין לְךָ וַיֹּאמֶר בְּקַשְׁתְּךָ עַד-חָצֵי הַמֶּלֶכְיָה וְחַשְׁעָשָׂה: ג וְתַעֲנֵן אָסְטָר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְתַהֲמֵר אָסְטָר מִצְאָתֵי תָּן בְּעִזִּיךְ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאָסְטָר הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב תַּפְתִּין לְיִגְפְּשֵׁי בְּשָׁאָלָתִי וְעַמִּי בְּבַקְשָׁתִי: ד כי גַּמְבְּרוּנוּ אָנָּי וְעַמִּי לְהַדְשִׁמֵּיד לְהַנְּרוֹג וְלְאַבְדֵּן אַלְלוּ עַצְבָּלִים וְלְשָׁפֹות גַּמְבְּרוּנוּ הַחֲרִשְׁתִּי כי אִין הָאָר שְׁוֹה בְּגַעַק הַמֶּלֶךְ: ס וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוּרוֹשׁ וַיֹּאמֶר לְאָסְטָר הַמֶּלֶךְ מַיְ הַוָּה זֶה וְאִי-זֶה הוּא אַשְׁר-מֶלֶךְ לְבּוּ לְעַשׂוֹת כֵּן: וַיֹּאמֶר אָסְטָר אִישׁ צָר וַיֹּאַיֵּב הַמְּנֻהָר הַבָּה וְהַמְּנֻהָנָה גַּבְעַת מִלְּפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּלֶךְ: וְהַמֶּלֶךְ קָם בְּתַחְתָּו מִפְשָׁתָה בַּבָּין אַל-גַּעַת הַבִּיטָן וְהַמְּנֻהָנָה עַל-גַּנְפְּשׁוֹן מִאָסְטָר הַמֶּלֶךְ כי רָאָה בְּיַדְלָמָה אַלְיוֹ גַּרְעָה מִאַת הַמֶּלֶךְ: ח וְהַמֶּלֶךְ שֶׁבּ מִגְּעַת הַבִּיטָן אַל-בִּיטָה | מִשְׁתָּה הַבָּין

7:8 Achashverosh returned to the banquet and found Haman sprawled across Esther's couch begging for his life. The king now turned this scene to his own advantage and yelled, "Do you also want to rape my queen?"

Haman had many followers and they could cause severe political problems for the king. But as a rapist, even on a trumped-up charge, Haman could command no loyalties or followers.

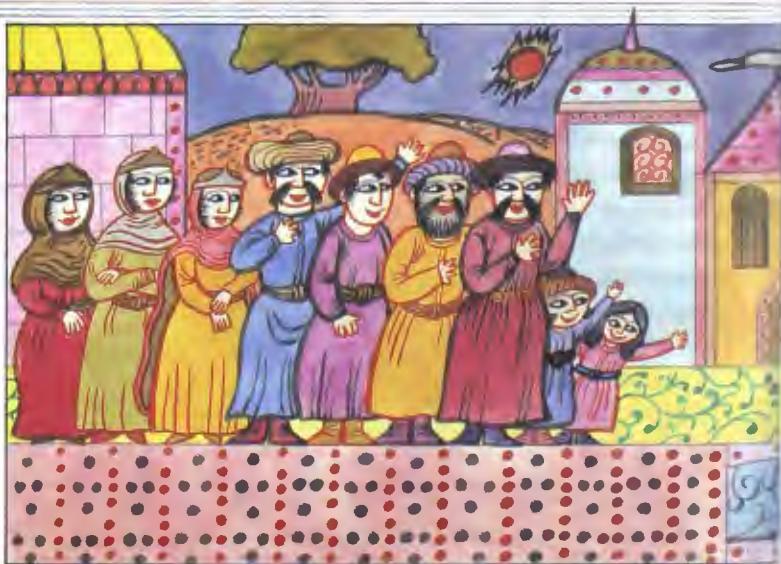


CHAPTER SEVEN

1. The king and Haman came to Queen Esther's banquet.
2. Once again, the king asked Esther, "What is your wish, Queen Esther? Even if you ask for one half of my kingdom, it shall be yours."
3. Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor in the king's eyes, and if it pleases the king, save my life and the lives of my people."
4. For I and my people have been sold to those who wish to exterminate us. If we had been sold as slaves, I would have remained silent, but this decree will create many problems for the king."
5. Then King Ah-chash-ver-osh said to Queen Esther: "Who is this evil schemer and where is he?"
6. And Queen Esther said: "There sits our enemy, wicked Haman." Haman trembled in terror before the king and queen.
7. The king arose in anger and went into the garden for some air, while Haman stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life, for he saw that his fate was sealed by the king.

7:4 Until this point Achashverosh was still unaware that Esther was a Jewess. Now he knew that the extermination order could also be applied to his beloved queen, Esther.

7:5 The word **בֹּאָה** ("he said") is repeated twice to indicate great respect for King Achashverosh.



וְהַמָּן נִפְלֵל עַל-הַמִּלְחָמָה אֲשֶׁר אָסְתַּר עֲלֵיכָה נִיְאָמֵר הַמֶּלֶךְ הָגֵם לְכַבּוֹשׁ
אֶת-הַמִּלְחָמָה עַפְיִ בְּבִית נְרָבָר יָצָא מִפְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיְפִּגְיוּ הַמָּן שְׁפָיו
טַ וַיִּאָמֵר חָרְבָּנָה אֲקָד מִן-הַסּוּרִיסִים לְפִנֵּי הַמֶּלֶךְ גַּם הַגְּדוּעָז
אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה הַמָּן לְמִרְדָּכָי אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר-טוֹב עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ עַמְּדָ בְּבִית הַמָּן
גַּבּוֹת חַמְשִׁים אַמְּה וַיִּאָמֵר בַּמֶּלֶךְ תָּלָהוּ עַל-יוֹם וַיַּחֲלֹל אֶת-הַמָּן
עַל-הַעֲזָן אֲשֶׁר-הַכִּין לְמִרְדָּכָי וְחַמְתַּת הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁבָכָה: ס

פרק ח'

ח א בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא נִמְןָה הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲמְשֻׁרוֹשׁ לְאָסְתַּר הַמִּלְחָמָה אֶת-בִּית
הַמָּן צָבָר כִּיהוּדִים (הַיְהוּדִים קָרְבָּן) וּמִרְדָּכָי בָּא לְפִנֵּי הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי-הַגִּידָה
אָסְתַּר מֵהַ הוֹא-לְלָה: ב וַיַּסַּר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-טְבַעַתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר הַעֲבִיר מִהַּמָּן
וַיַּתְּהִנֵּה לְמִרְדָּכָי וַיְפִּשְׁם אָסְתַּר אֶת-מִרְדָּכָי עַל-בִּית הַמָּן: ס וַיַּפְוֹסֶךָ
אָסְתַּר וַיַּדְבֵּר לְפִנֵּי הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיַּפְלֵל לְפִנֵּי רַגְלָיו וַתְּכַהֵן וַתְּחַתְּנוּלָה
לְקַעֲבִיר אֶת-כְּרֻעָתָה הַמָּן גָּאָגָן וְאֵת מַחְשָׁבָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר קָשַׁב עַל-
הַיְהוּדִים: ד וַיְוַשַּׁט הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאָסְתַּר אֶת שְׁרַבְתַּת הַזָּבֵב וַתְּקַם אָסְתַּר

3. Haman initially did not tell the king that he wanted to kill the Jews of Persia. The Jews were no threat to Achashverosh since they had no political base of their own.

Wasn't it Mordechi the Jew who had saved his life? What other lies had Haman told him?

4. Achashverosh loved Esther. She was a Jewess. Would Haman kill her too?

Achashverosh quickly made his decision. When he went into the garden it was to tell his guards to prepare the death hood for Haman.

7:9 Haman has committed another misdeed against the king. He has constructed a gallows on which to hang Mordechi the Jew, the very same Mordechi who had saved the king's life.

8:1 Only special individuals and high officials were privileged to "come before the king."

8. When the king returned, he found Haman lying across the foot of Esther's couch where she was reclining. The king roared, "This evil man intends to rape my queen in my own palace right in front of my eyes." As the king spoke, his guards covered Haman's head.

9. Then Harbona, one of the aides, said, "Sire, the gallows which Haman has constructed for Mordechi stands in his courtyard." "Hang Haman on his own gallows," ordered the king.

10. So they hung Haman on the gallows which he had constructed for Mordechi, and the king's anger was cooled.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. On that day, King Ah-chash-ver-osh gave the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to Esther the Queen. Mordechi was brought before the king, for Esther had told the king what he was to her.

2. The king gave his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordechi; Esther appointed Mordechi supervisor in charge of Haman's estate.

3. Once again Esther came before the king and begged him to stop the extermination plot against the Jews.

4. The king raised his golden scepter, and Esther arose and stood before the king.

7:8 Achashverosh cleverly sorted out the evidence against Haman and decided that he was a threat to his crown and also to his beloved Esther.

1. Haman had unconsciously revealed his secret ambition to become king of Persia by suggesting that "the man whom the king wishes to honor" wear the king's clothing, and ride the king's horse.

2. Haman, second to the king, controlled an organization of strategically positioned storm troopers who were ready to kill the Jews. This army could also be used to overthrow the monarchy.

וְתַעֲמֵד לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: הַנְּתַחֲרֵר אַם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טֹוב וְאַם-מִזְאַתִּי תַּן
לִפְנֵיו וְכַשֵּׁר הַדָּבָר לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְטוֹבָה אֲנִי בְּעִינֵּי וְכַתֵּב לְהַשְׁיב אֶת-
הַסּוּסִים מִחְשָׁבַת הַמֶּן בְּנַ-הַמְּדָחָא הַאֲגָנִי אֲשֶׁר בָּמְבָב לְאַבְדֵּר אֶת-
הַיְהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל-מִדְיָנָה הַמֶּלֶךְ: וְכִי אִיכְבָּה אַוְיכָל וְרָאִיתִי בְּרַעַת
אֲשֶׁר-יִמְצָא אֶת-עַמִּי וְאִיכָּבָה אַוְיכָל וְרָאִיתִי בְּאַבְנֵן מַולְדָּתִי: ס
וְיִאמְרֵר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲמַשְׁוֹרֵשׁ לְאִסְתַּר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְלִקְרָדֵקִי הַיְהוּדִי הַהָּה
בֵּית-הַמֶּן נָתַתִּי לְאַסְתַּר וְאַתָּה פָּלוּ עַל-הַעֲלֵץ עַל אֲשֶׁר-שָׁלַח יְדוֹ
בְּיִהוּדִים (כִּיהוּדִים קָרִי): ח וְאַתָּם כְּחַבּוּ עַל-הַיְהוּדִים בְּטוּב בְּעִינֵיכֶם
בְּשָׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ וְחַחְמוּ בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ קִי-כְּתָבָא אֲשֶׁר-גַּכְּתָב בְּשָׁם-הַמֶּלֶךְ
וְנָחָתָם בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵין לְפָשִׁיב: ט וַיַּקְרָא אֶל-סְפָרִי-הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּעַת
הַהָּיָה בָּחֵךְ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי הַוְּאַ-חֲדָשׁ סִינְן בְּשָׁלוֹשָׁה וְעַשְׂרִים בָּזָה וַיַּכְתֵּב
בְּכָל-אֲשֶׁר-צָנָה מַרְדָּקִי אֶל-הַיְהוּדִים וְאֶל הַחֲמָשָׁדְרָפָנִים וְהַפְּחָותָן

8:5 The king's decree could not be altered. To alter the king's decree would call his wisdom into question.



5. Esther said, "If it pleases the king, and if you love me, send out a decree reversing Haman's order to exterminate the Jews in all the provinces of the king.

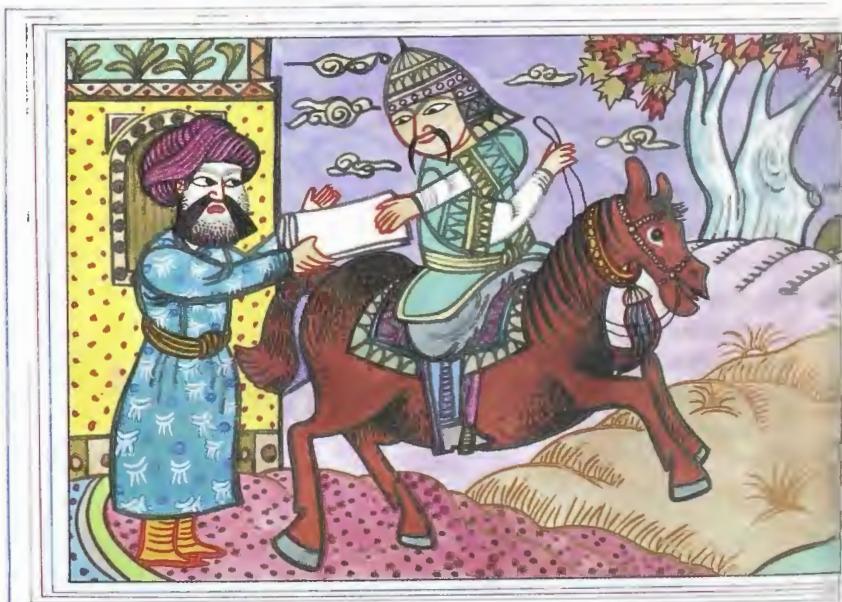
6. How can I look on while my people are being butchered?"

7. Then King Ah-chash-ver-osh said to Queen Esther and Mordechi the Jew, "I have already given Haman's estate to Esther and have hanged him because he tried to destroy your people.

8. Now, I authorize you and Mordechi to issue new orders regarding the Jews and to seal your decree with my signet ring and in my name: for any decree with the king's name and sealed with the king's signet ring may not be revoked."

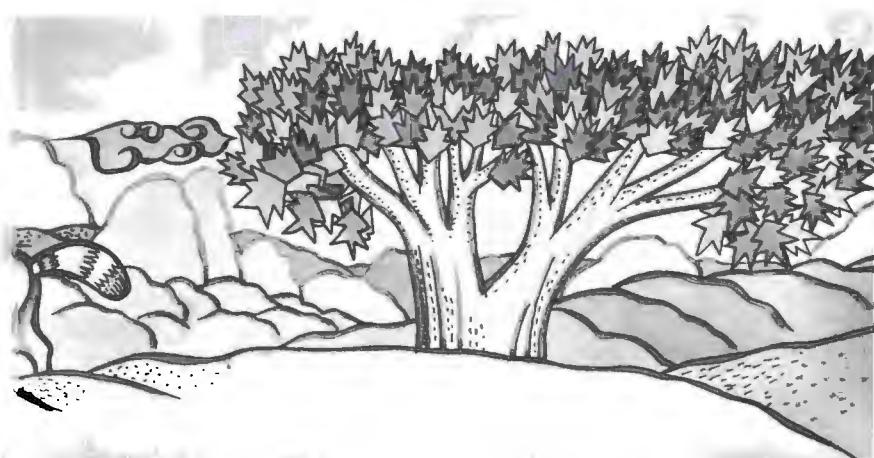
9. Immediately, the king's secretaries were summoned, and on the twenty-third day of the month of Sivan, a decree dictated by Mordechi was sent to the Jews and the governors and princes of the provinces. From India to Ethiopia — one hundred and twenty-seven in all, this decree was written in many languages.

8:5 The king's decree could not be revoked, but decrees by other officials could be changed. Esther subtly suggests that the extermination order was decreed by Haman and therefore could be revoked.



ושלי המדינות אשר | מתקדו ועד פוש שבע ועשרים ומאה מדינה
 מדינה ומדינה בכתבה עם עם כלשנו ולא-היהורים בכתבה
 וכילשונם: ויכתב בשם הפלך אמשורש ניחום בטבעת הפלך
 ושלח ספרים ביד גראטים בטוטים רכבי הרכש האמשתרנים בני
 הרככים: יא אשר נמן הפלך ליוהרים אשר | בכל-עיר ועיר
 להקהל ולעמד על-נפשם להשמד להרג ולאבד את-כל-חיל עם
 ומדינה בארים אתם טר ונשים ושללים לבוז: יכ בימים אשר בכל-
 מדינות הפלך אמשורש בשלושה עשר לחדר שנימ-עשור הוא-
 תרש אדר: יכ פחשון הכהב להבנתן דת בכל-מדינה ומדינה גלי-
 לכל-העדים ולחיות כיהודים עתודים (היהדים עתודים קרי) לעומם
 להנחים מאיביהם: יד גראטים רכבי הרכש האמשתרנים יצאו
 מבהלים ורחוקים בדרכם הפלך והבנתה בשושן הבירה: ס-
 טו ומרקבי יא | מלפני הפלך בלבוש מלכות תכלת וחור ועטרת
 נקב גודלה ומקריך ביזן וארכמן ועיר שושן צהלה ושמחה:
 טו ליוחדים הבנתה אורנה ושמחה ושם ויקר: יכ בכל-מדינה
 ומדינה ובכל-עיר ועיר מקום אשר דבר-הפלך ותות מגע שמחה
 ושותן ליוחדים משקה ויום טוב ורבאים מעמי הארץ מתינדים כי-
 נפל פחד ליוהרים עליהם:

8:15–16 These are the second and third verses said aloud in the synagogue by the congregation during the reading of the Megillah.



10. Mordechi wrote the order in the name of King Ah-
hash-ver-osh and sealed it with the king's signet ring, and
the order was carried by speedy riders on horses, camels
and mules.

11. The king allowed the Jews to band together, to defend
themselves, and to destroy those who would attack and rob
them, also their children and their women, and to take their
possessions.

12. Mordechi's decree was to take effect on the thirteenth
day of the month of Adar.

13. The order was to be publicized to all the people and
enforced in every province, so that the Jews could avenge
themselves against their enemies.

14. Messengers rushed out on speedy horses at the king's
command and the decree was also published in the capital,
Shushan.

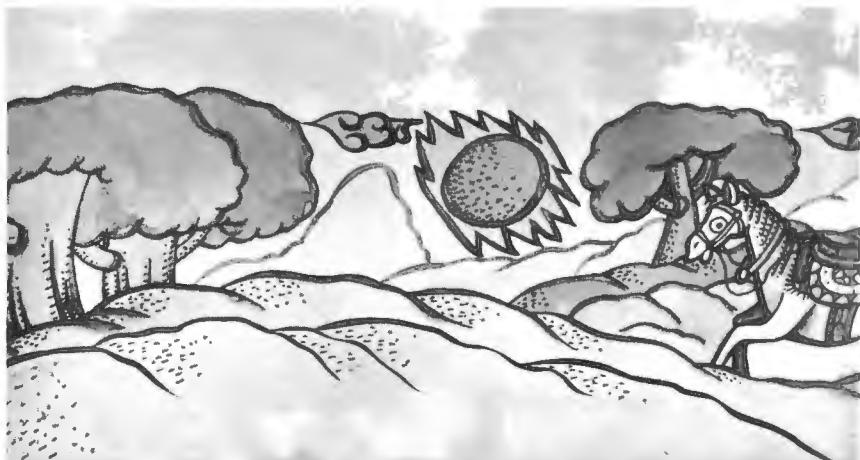
15. Mordechi left the king's presence dressed in royal
blue and white robes, a golden crown and a cape of purple
linen, while the city of Shushan celebrated joyfully.

16. Now there was light and joy, gladness and honor for
the Jews of Persia.

17. In every city, as soon as the king's decree arrived, the
Jews declared a holiday, filled with joy and gladness: and
many of the people converted to Judaism, since they did not
want to be harmed.

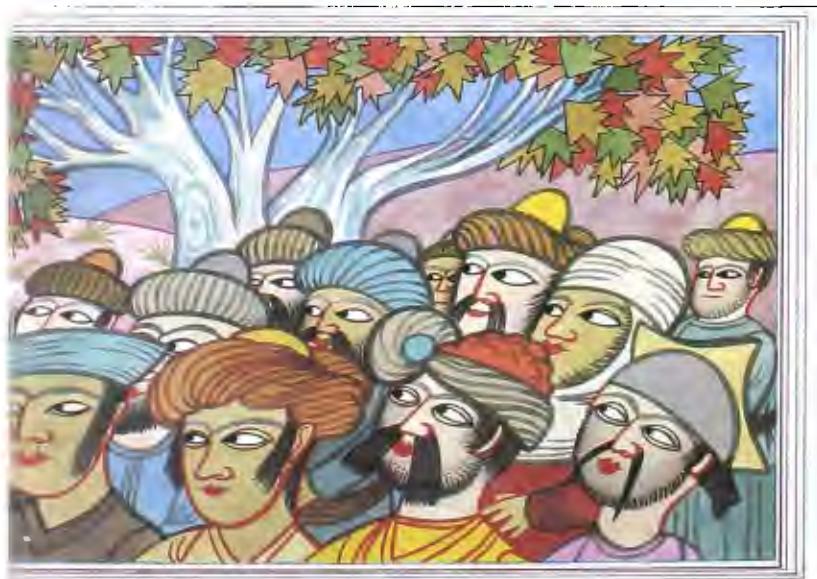
8:10 The efficient control of the far-flung Persian Empire depended upon an effective and efficient communication network. The Persians operated a "pony express" delivery service. The couriers relayed the mail from station to station, where the changeover of animals and riders took place.

8:11 Under Persian law, Achashverosh could not rescind his first ex-
termination decree. So he issued a new decree permitting the Jews to
defend themselves against their enemies.



ט א וּבְשִׁנְיִם עַלְפָר קָרְשׁ הַוְא-תְּרֵשׁ אַלְרַ בְּשִׁלּוֹשָׁה עַלְפָר יוֹם בּוֹ
 אַשְׁר הָגַע רַכְבַּת-מֶלֶךְ וְתַחַת לְהַעֲשָׂה בְּזָוָם אַשְׁר שָׁבָרְוּ אִירְבִּי
 הַיְהוּדִים לְשִׁלּוֹט בְּהָם וּנְהַפְּכוּ הַוְא אַשְׁר יִשְׁלֹטְוּ הַיְהוּדִים הַמֶּה
 בְּשִׁנְיִם: בּ נְקַעְלָוּ הַיְהוּדִים בְּעַרְיוֹם בְּכָל-מִדְינּוֹת הַפְּלָקָה
 אַחֲשִׁוּרִישׁ ?שְׁלָמָן נָד בְּמַכְשִׁי גְּעַטָּם וְאִישׁ לְאַ-עֲמָד בְּפִנְיִם כִּי-
 נָפַל פְּחוּדָם עַל-כָּלָה הַעֲקִים: גּ וְכָל-שְׁלֵרִי הַמִּדְינּוֹת וּהַאֲחַשְׁדְּרָפְנִים
 וּהַפְּחוּdot וּעַשְׂיִ הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לְמֶלֶךְ מְנַשְּׁיָּאִים אֶת- הַיְהוּדִים קִינְפָּל
 פְּמַד-מַרְדָּקִי עַלְיִם: דּ קִינְדָּול מַרְדָּקִי בְּבֵית הַמֶּלֶךְ וּשְׁמָעוֹ הַוְלָךְ
 בְּכָל-הַמִּדְינּוֹת קִינְהָאִישׁ מַרְדָּקִי הַוְלָךְ וְגַדּוֹ: הּ וַיַּכְּבֹד הַיְהוּדִים בְּכָל-
 אַיִבְנִים מִפְתַּח-תַּרְבָּה וְהַרְגָּגָן וְאַבְגָּן וּמִעַשְׂיוֹ בְּשִׁנְיִים כְּרַצְוֹנִים:
 וּ וּבְשִׁוּשָׁן הַבִּירָה הַרְגָּגָה הַיְהוּדִים וְאַבְדָּד חִמְשׁ מִאַת אִישׁ: זּ וְאַתָּה
 פְּרַשְׁנָהָמָא וְאַתָּה דְּלָפָן וְאַתָּה אַסְפָּחָמָא: חּ וְאַתָּה פְּזָרָחָמָא וְאַתָּה אַדְלָיא
 וְאַתָּה אַרְקִדָּמָא: טּ וְאַתָּה פְּרַמְּשָׁחָמָא וְאַתָּה אַרְיִיסִי וְאַתָּה אַרְיִינִי וְאַתָּה
 נְתָחָא: יּ עַשְׂרָת בְּנֵי קָמָן בְּוּ-הַפְּנִימָה צִיר הַיְהוּדִים הַרְגָּגָה וּבְבָזָה לֹא

Rabbi Johanan said, "The vav of Vaizatha must be lengthened like a boat-pole, since they were all hanged together on one long pole."



CHAPTER NINE

1. And on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month — Adar — the day the enemies of the Jews had chosen for their extermination, the opposite happened, and now the Jews were victorious.

2. The Jews in all the provinces of King Ah-chash-ver-osh gathered together to avenge themselves against their enemies and no one opposed them because they were afraid.

3. And all the government officials elevated the Jews to high office because they feared Mordechi.

4. Mordechi had much influence and power in the palace and his fame was growing.

5. And the Jews defeated all their foes by the sword, destroying their enemies.

6. The Jews defeated their enemies and killed 500 enemies in Shushan.

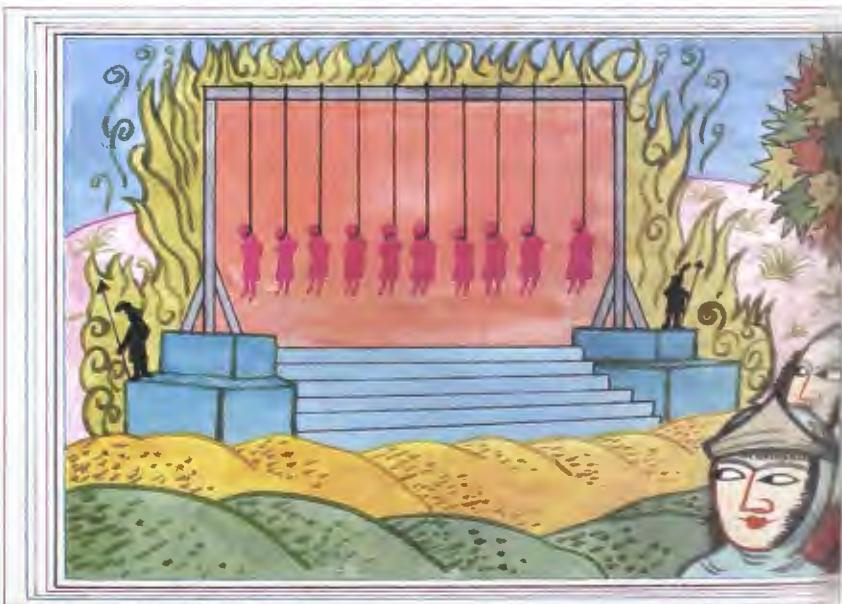
7. and Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha,

8. and Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha,

9. and Parmashta and Arissai, and Aridai, and Vaizatha.

10. They killed the ten sons of Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, but they did not steal any of their property.

9:10 Rabbi Adda of Joppa said, "The ten sons of Haman and the word 'ten' should be said in one breath." What is the reason? Because all their souls departed together.



שָׁלַחַו אֶחָדֶם: יא בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא בְּאַמְסָפֶר קָרְבָּרִיגִים בְּשִׁוּשָׁן הַבִּיקָה לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: יב וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאָסְטָר הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּשִׁוּשָׁן הַבִּירָה הַרְגָּנוֹ קִיהוּדִים וְאֶבֶד חַמְשָׁה מֵאוֹת אִישׁ וְאֶת עַשְׂרָת בְּנֵי-קָמָן בְּשָׁאָר מִדְינּוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ מֵהָ עָשָׂו וּמַה-שְׁאַלְתָּךְ וַיַּגְתְּהַן לְךָ וּמַה-בְּקַשְׁתָּךְ עַד וְחַעַשׂ: יג וַיֹּאמֶר אָסְטָר אֶמְסָפֶר אֶמְלָךְ תָּוב יְגַתְּהַן גַּם-מְתָר לִי-יהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּשִׁוּשָׁן לְעַשׂוֹת בְּגַת הַיּוֹם וְאֶת עַשְׂרָת בְּנֵי-קָמָן יְתַלְּוּ עַל-הַעֲצָם: יד וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַעֲשָׂה בְּנֵי-קָמָן בְּנֵי-קָמָן וְאֶת עַשְׂרָת בְּנֵי-קָמָן פָּלוּ: טו נַיְקָהַלְוּ הַיְהוּדִים (הַיְהוּדִים קָרִי) אֲשֶׁר-בְּשִׁוּשָׁן גַּם בְּיּוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר לְתַדֵּשׁ אֶדֶר וַיַּהֲרֹגּוּ בְּשִׁוּשָׁן שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ וּבְבָבָה לְאֶשְׁלָחוֹ אֶת-יָדָם: טז וְשָׁאָר קִיהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּמִדְינּוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ נַקְהָלוּ וְעַמְּדָר עַל-גְּנַפְשָׁם וְנוֹזֵם מַאֲיִבָּתָם וְהַרְגֵּל בְּשִׁנְאָתָם חַמְשָׁה וּשְׁבָעִים אַלְפָיִם וּבְבָבָה לְאֶשְׁלָחוֹ אֶת-יָדָם: יז בְּיּוֹם-שְׁלֹשָׁה עָשָׂר לְתַדֵּשׁ אֶדֶר וְנוֹזֵם בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר בּוֹ וּעַשָּׂה אֶתְהוּ יוֹם מִשְׁתָּחָה וּשְׁמַחָה: יח וְהַיְהוּדִים (הַיְהוּדִים קָרִי) אֲשֶׁר-בְּשִׁוּשָׁן נַקְהָלוּ בְּשְׁלֹשָׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ וּבְאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר גַּבּוֹ וְנוֹזֵם בְּחַמְשָׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ וּעַשָּׂה אֶתְהוּ יוֹם מִשְׁתָּחָה וּשְׁמַחָה: יט עַל-בְּנֵי-יְהוּדִים הַפְּרוּזִים (הַפְּרוּזִים קָרִי) הַיְשָׁבִים בְּצָעֵנִי הַפְּרוּזּוֹת עָשִׂים אֶת יוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר לְתַדֵּשׁ אֶדֶר שְׁמַחָה וּמִשְׁתָּחָה וְנוֹזֵם טָוב וּמְשָׁלֵם מִנוֹת אִישׁ לְגַדְעָה: כ נַיְקָהַב מַרְדָּכָי אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלָה וַיַּשְׁלַח סְפָרִים אֶל-כָּל-הַיְהוּדִים אֲשֶׂר בְּכָל-מִדְינּוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶמְשֹׁרוֹשׁ הַקְּרוּבִים וּהַרְחֹוקִים: כא לְהַיִם עַל-הָם לְהִזְהִיר עָשִׂים אֶת יוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר לְתַדֵּשׁ אֶדֶר וְאֶת יוֹם-חַמְשָׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ בְּכָל-שָׂגָה וְשָׁגָה: ככ בְּיִמְמִים אֲשֶׁר-גַּנְחָיו בְּגַם הַיְהוּדִים מַאֲיִבָּתָם וְהַתְּדִישׁ אֲשֶׁר גַּהֲפָד לָהֶם מִגְּנוֹן

9:15 The Jews did not steal any of the property from their enemies. The money and property went into the king's treasury.

Contrast this with the Hamanites, who wanted to steal Jewish property for themselves.

9:19 The law of "Shusan Purim," celebrating Purim on the fifteenth day of Adar, is not specifically mentioned in the Megillah. The rabbis derived the law of "Shusan Purim" from verses 19 and 21.

11. That day, the king learned how many people were killed in the capital of Shushan.

12. Then the king said to Queen Esther: "The Jews have killed 500 enemies and the ten sons of Haman in the capital of Shushan alone; just imagine what they have done in my other provinces! Now, what else do you want? Tell me and I will do it!"

13. Then Esther said, "If it pleases your majesty, allow the Jews in Shushan to do tomorrow what they did today, and let Haman's sons be hanged on the gallows as an object lesson for all to see."

14. And the king commanded that it should be done; and the decree was issued in Shushan, and the ten sons of Haman were hanged.

15. And on the fourteenth day of Adar the Jews in Shushan killed 300 more of their enemies, but they did not steal any of their property.

16. Meanwhile, the Jews in the other provinces gathered together to defend themselves against their enemies; they killed 75,000 of those who hated them, but they did not steal any of their property.

17. On the thirteenth day of the month of Adar they rested, and on the fourteenth day they celebrated their victory with feasting and with joy.

18. The Jews in Shushan assembled on the thirteenth and fourteenth days of the month, and on the fifteenth day they celebrated their victory with feasting and joy.

19. Therefore the Jews who live in the villages celebrate the fourteenth day of Adar with joyous feasting and by exchanging gifts (shalach manot).

20. Mordechi recorded these events; he sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, to all the provinces of the king,

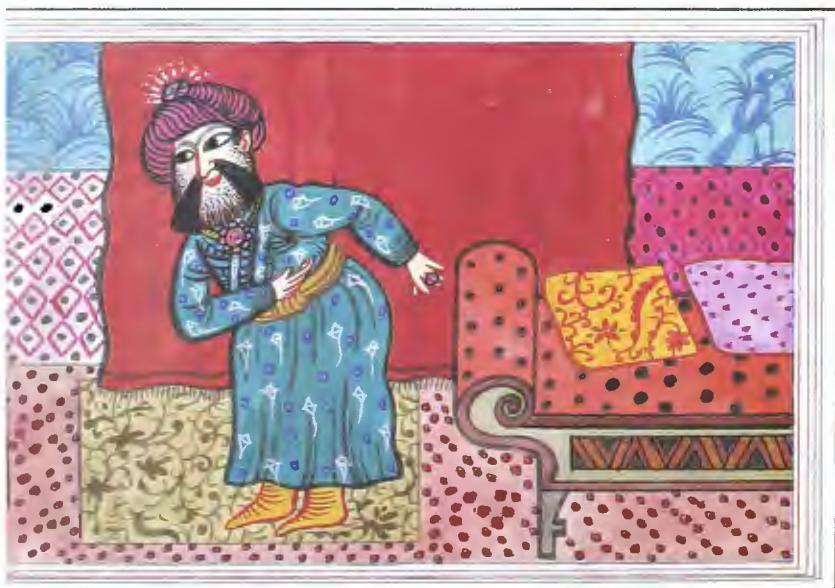
21. urging them to celebrate the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar every year as a holiday.

22. It was on those historic days that the Jews were saved from their enemies, and it was the month when their sorrow was changed to joy, and their mourning to happiness, making them into days of feasting and joy, and of exchanging gifts (shalach manot), and giving tzedakah to the poor.

9:13 Pockets of Haman's army of anti-Semites still existed. So Esther asked for another day in which to annihilate the killers.

לשם תה ומאבל ליום טוב לעשוות אותם ימי משתה ושם תה
ומשליח מנות איש לרעהו ומטנות לארכינום: כו וקיבל היהודים את
אשר-החולו לעשות ואות אשר-במך מרכבי אליהם: כו כי המן גור
המוך האגני צור כל-היהודים חשב על-היהודים לאביהם והפל
פור הוא הגובל להם ולאביהם: כו ובבאות לפניו הפליך אמר עמי
הספר ישב מחשבתו ברעה אשר-חשב על-היהודים על-ראשו
ותלו אותו ואח-בניו על-העץ: כו על-בן גוראו לימים הכללה פורים
על-שם הפור על-בן על-כל-דברי האגרת הזאת ומח-ראו על-בכה
וימה הצע אליהם: כו קימיו וקבל (וקבלו קרי) היהודים עלייהם וועל-
זעם ועל כל-היהודים עליהם ולא עברו להיות עשים את-שני
הימים הכללה בכם וכומם בכל-שנה ושנה: כו והימים הכללה
ונוקרים ונעלמים בכל-דור נדור משפה ומשפה מדינה ומדינה

9:28 The word "memory" refers to the reading of the Megillah.



23. And they adopted Mordechi's suggestion and made it a yearly custom.

24. Because Haman, the son of Hamedatha, the Agagite, plotted to exterminate the Jews just by a throw of the dice (pur).

25. But when Queen Esther brought it to the king's attention, he issued an official decree that Haman's evil extermination plan should be on his own head and that he and his ten sons should be hung.

26. So today, we call this holiday Purim, because of the word pur, which means "throwing the dice," because of the contents of the letter, and because of what had happened to them.

27. The Jews agreed to celebrate the holiday of Purim and pass it on to their children; they also decided to observe these two days every year.

28. And the days should be remembered and observed by each family in every generation, in every city and province, so that the memory of the days of Purim never cease among their descendants.

9:27 Those who became Jews and those who, in the future, would become Jews.



וְעִיר וְעִיר וְיָמִי הַפּוֹרִים הָאֶלָּה לֹא יַעֲבְרוּ מִתּוֹךְ הַיְהוּדִים וְזַכְרָם
לְאִיסּוֹף מִזְרָעָם: ס וּמְכַה אָסָּה הַפְּלָבָה בְּחַ-אֲבִיטִיל וּמְרַדְּכִי
הַיְהוּדִי אֶת-כָּל-תַּקְרֵב לְקָרְבָּן אֶת-אֶגְרָת הַפְּרִים הַזֹּאת הַשְׁנִית:
וְנִשְׁלַח סְפָרִים אֶל-כָּל-הַיְהוּדִים אֶל-שְׁבֻע וְעִשְׂרִים וּמִאַה מִדִּינָה
מִלְכָוֹת אַמְשְׁנָרוֹשׁ דְּבָרֵי שְׁלוֹם וְאֶמְתָּה: לֹא לִקְרָם אֶת-יִמְיָם הַפְּרִים
הָאֶלָּה בְּזָמִינֵיכֶם בְּאַשְׁר קִים עַלְיָהּ מְרַדְּכֵי הַיְהוּדִי וְאַסְטָר הַפְּלָבָה
וּבְאַשְׁר קִימָיו עַל-נִפְשָׁם וּעַל-זָרָעָם דְּבָרֵי הַצּוּמוֹת וּנְעַקְתָּם:
לֹב וּמְאָמֵר אַסְטָר קִים דְּבָרֵי הַפְּרִים הָאֶלָּה וּנְכַתֵּב בְּפִפְרֵר: ס

פרק י'

י א וְיַשְׁם הַפְּלָבָה אַחֲשְׁרָשׁ (אחשveroш קרוי) י מֵס עַל-הָאָרֶץ וְאַיִל הַיָּם:
ב וְכָל-מִעָשָׂה תִּקְפֹּן וְגִבּוּרָתוֹ וְפִרְשָׁתָן גָּדוֹלָת מְרַדְּכֵי אֲשֶׁר גָּדוֹלָו:
ג הַפְּלָבָה הַלּוֹא-תְּהִימָה כְּתוּבִים עַל-פִּרְשָׁר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים לְמַלְכֵי מִנְיָן וּפְגָס:
ד כִּי י מְרַדְּכֵי הַיְהוּדִי מִשְׁנָה לְפָלָב אַמְשְׁנָרוֹשׁ וְגָדוֹל לְיְהוּדִים וּרְצָיו:
לֹרְבָ אַחֲיו לְרַשׁ טֻב לְעַמּוֹ וְדַבָּר שְׁלוֹם לְכָל-זָרָעָו:

חוק

10:3 Mordechi, the new grand vizier, projected Persian power beyond its traditional and historical boundaries.

Even countries not included in the Persian Empire paid taxes to King Achashverosh.

10:3 This is the last verse among the four verses read aloud by the congregation during the reading of the Megillah.

The Megillah reader then repeats the verses.

10:3 Not only did Mordechi help people who came to him with requests but he searched for ways to ease the life of his fellow Jews.

After the reading of the Megillah, the following blessing is recited:

ברוך אתה יי' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם. הַרְבָ אֶת-דִרְבֵינוּ. וְהַרְבָ אֶת-
דִינֵנוּ. וְהַנְגַךְ אֶת-גִנְמַתְנוּ. וְהַגְפְרֵעַ לְנוּ מִצְרָינוּ. וְהַמְשַלֵּם גַמְיָל
לְכָל-אֹיְבֵי נִפְשָׁנוּ. ברוך אתה יי' הַגְפְרֵעַ לְעַמוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכָּל-
אָרְיוֹן. הַאֲל הַמּוֹשִׁיעַ:

29. Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abichail and Mordechi the Jew, wrote a second letter confirming the establishment of the holiday of Purim.

30. And he sent letters to all the Jews in the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, with messages of goodwill and peace.

31. to confirm that they observe the days of Purim, on the correct date, as Mordechi and Esther had decreed and as they had set for themselves and for their descendants, including the rules for the fast and the Purim prayers.

32. And Esther's decree officially confirmed the holiday of Purim in writing —

CHAPTER TEN

1. And the king set a tax on his kingdom and the islands which belonged to him.

2. His mighty deeds, on account of the greatness of Mordechi, and the honor bestowed upon him by the king are all recorded in the history of the kings of Media and Persia.

3. For Mordechi the Jew was second in power to King Ah-chash-ver-osh. He was respected by the Jews, and revered by great numbers of his countrymen; he constantly worked for the welfare of his people and for the goodwill of all their descendants.

THE END

9:29 At first, only Mordechi promoted the festival of Purim and the religious obligations to observe it. But since that did not persuade all the Jews in the Persian Empire, both Esther and Mordechi wrote the second letter about the religious obligation to observe the new holiday of Purim.

9:31 The Nazis forbid the reading of the Megillah for fear that it might spark hope and resistance. However, the Jews in the extermination camps wrote and read the Megillah from memory despite the threat of instant executions.

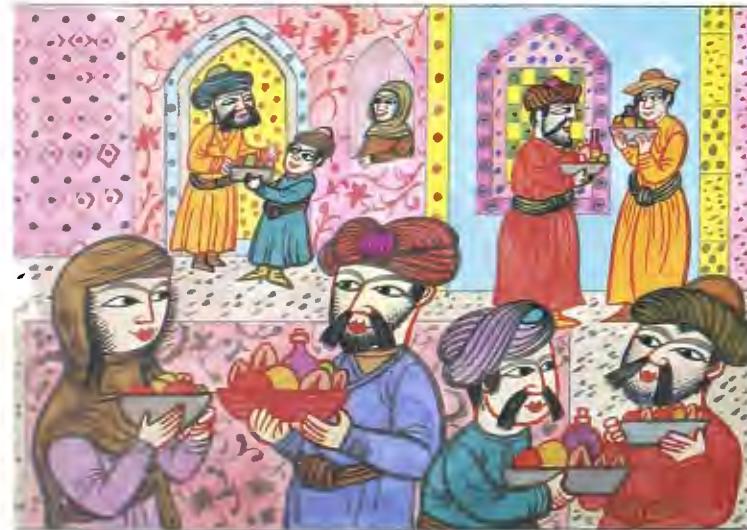
9:32 Esther requested the wise men of her generation to record the events of the period. This record is the Megillah.

After the reading of the Megillah, the following blessing is recited:

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who heard our plea and passed judgment on our behalf, avenging us by punishing our mortal foes and bringing punishment upon our bitter enemies. Blessed are You, Lord, who delivers the people of Israel from all their enemies, for you are God who saves.

PURIM LAWS

1. Purim is to be celebrated on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar.
2. Before the reading of the Megillah, it is customary for every adult to contribute *Machzit Hashekel* ("half-a-shekel") to tzedakah. The *Machzit Hashekel* is a remembrance of the shekel Jews used to donate in the month of Adar for the upkeep of the Holy Temple. It is customary to give the equivalent of three coins because the term *Machzit Hashekel* is mentioned three times in the same biblical paragraph.
3. The day before Purim (13th of Adar) is the Fast of Esther. On this day, we remember Esther and the Jews of Persia, who fasted and prayed for deliverance from Haman's evil decree. We too fast on that day.
4. The best way to observe the Mitzvah of hearing the Megillah is to listen to it "among a multitude of people in a synagogue."
5. The day after Purim is called Shushan Purim. According to the Megillah, the Jews of Shushan celebrated their victory over Haman a day later than the other Jews because they fought one additional day.
6. It is an established custom for the Megillah reader to unroll the Megillah and fold it, folio on folio, just like a letter. The Megillah tells us that Mordechai sent a letter to the



Jewish communities of Persia. The folding of the Megillah symbolizes this event.

7. The Megillah reader recites three blessings before the recitation.

8. After the Megillah is read and rolled up completely, the reader recites a final blessing.

9. If there is no one in the congregation who can read the Megillah with the proper intonations, one may read it without the musical intonations.

10. To fulfill the mitzvah of *Shalach Manot* one must give at least two portions to one friend and *tzedakah* to at least two poor people. *Shalach Manot* should be sent in the daytime.

11. The *Shalach Manot* should be gifts of food which can be eaten without further preparation.

12. Purim should be celebrated by eating, drinking, and making merry. On the afternoon of the fourteenth day of Adar one should make a Purim Seudah feast. This feast, often eaten with family and friends, usually extends into the night.



PURIM FACTS

Adloyada: There's a talmudic proverb saving that one should drink merrily on Purim, until one is so tipsy that one knows not (*ad d'lo yada*) the difference between "blessed be Mordecai" (*barukh Mordecai*) and "cursed be Haman" (*arur Haman*). This expression has given the name to the annual Adloyada Purim Carnivals in Israel, gala affairs complete with floats, streamers, costumes, and balloons.

Gragger: Noisemaking at the mention of Haman's name during the reading of the Scroll of Esther is an old, old custom. The gragger has been in use since the thirteenth century in France and Germany. It combines two primitive instruments: the "bull-roarer" and the "scraper." The "bull-roarer" consisted of a long stick at the top of which was attached a string and at the end of the string a thin board. When this was twirled, it made a strange noise. The "scraper" is a notched shell or bone which was scraped with a stiff object. The gragger combines both these objects. In some countries, Haman's name was written on the soles of the shoes, which were rubbed on the floor during the Megillah reading.

The Jews of Provence and France used to write the name of Haman on stones. When Haman's name was mentioned by the Megillah reader, children erased it by rubbing two stones against each other. Thus the spirit of the biblical injunction to erase the memory of Amalek was fulfilled.

Austrian Jews drown out the name Haman. They encourage their children to clap two stones in order to create a booing effect. Adults used to whisper *zecher tzadik liverachah* ("may the memory of the righteous be a blessing") after the mention of Mordechi's name, and *shem reshaim yirkav* ("may the name of the wicked rot") after Haman's.

Megillah: The Megillah, the story of Queen Esther, is read in the synagogue on the joyous festival of Purim. Whenever the name of the wicked Haman (from whose vicious plot Queen Esther saved her people, the Jews of Persia) is read, the children make noises to drown out his name. The Megillah used in the synagogue is written just like the Torah scroll; but for home use there are also illustrated editions. Some medieval Megillot have beautiful illuminations; others have engravings and woodcuts. Some are kept in beautiful cases of carved wood, tooled silver or fine filigree work. Purim is a joyful festival and Jews have derived joy from the Megillah for many centuries.

Hamantashen: These are the Purim pastries without which no Purim celebration would be complete. They are three-cornered little cakes filled with poppy seeds or plum jam. Some say that the name comes from mohntashen, or “poppy seed pouches”; others claim that the cakes resemble Haman’s hat! An interesting sidelight is that in Hebrew a hamantash is called ozen Haman, or “Haman’s Ear.”

Mishloah Manot: Often called Shalach Monos, this means the “sending of gifts.” The custom is mentioned in the Book of Esther — “make them days of feasting and joy, of sending portions to one another.” That’s where we get the oh-so-wonderful custom of giving and receiving presents on Purim!

Purim Fun: Because happiness and fun are key aspects of Purim, play-acting or mummery has been a traditional part of this holiday for centuries. The Purim play, a standard feature in Jewish schools today, has a long and honorable ancestry. Purim plays were first presented in Italy and Germany, and spread to Russia, Poland, Lithuania, Galicia, Rumania, and other countries in Eastern Europe.

Purim-time became the Jewish theatrical season, and in some European communities, Purim “show-time” lasted for two whole weeks.

Usually the shpieler, or actors, made up their lines as they went along, throwing in as many jokes as possible. Clowns and fools and other fanciful characters somehow mixed their way into the performances. In one play, there was a clown named Pickle-Herring, who played practical jokes on spectators in the audience.

Most of the time, the plays were presented with song and dance by the wandering Purim-shpieler, accompanied by musicians. They visited house after house, performed their show, and received contributions after they sang a jingle like this one: “Today is Purim, tomorrow no more; Give me a penny, I’ll be gone from your door!”

These Purim plays gave way to indoor plays, carnivals, and masquerades.

Zakhor: It means “remember,” and Shabbat Zakhor is the Sabbath before Purim. An extra portion of the Torah is read. This portion tells of the evil that Amalek did to our ancestors. The Haftarah, or portion of the Prophets, read on Shabbat Zakhor describes King Saul’s meeting with Agag, ruler of the Amalekites, since Haman is portrayed as an Agagite, a direct descendent of Amalek.